# "EIGHT MILLION WAYS TO DIE"

Screenplay by

OLIVER STONE

Based on the Novels

"Eight Million Ways To Die"

and

"A Stab In The Dark"

by

Lawrence Block

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NOVEMBER 1, 1984

FADE IN:

MONTAGE - EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREETS - ANY NIGHT

CREDIT SEQUENCE. We're in the Lower East Side area -- with its population of street junkies and prostitutes loitering openly on the sidewalks. The buys are being made without caution. Four Black Guys in a maroon car are rapping with a Spanish Guy in pigtails. Rich white Kids are coming out of a shooting gallery, high. Somebody fiddles with a RADIO, picking up King Sunny Ade's "Juju" BEAT on 105 FM -- a mellow, jazzy African beat for the city.

MATT SCUDDER munches on a piece of cold pizza. He moves like a battered quarterback, hunkered, bandy-legged, alert to further abuse. It's his city, seen from his point of view. The streets are like newspaper stories flashing by, in brief introductions that will be returned to later in the story.

SCUDDER VOICE
... New York in the summer's like any other tropical port -- Saigon, Rangoon, Hong Kong. It swelters and moves, and sometimes I think there outta be palm trees growing along the sidewalks -- they fit right in with the whores and the hustlers. Some nights I feel Africa's in the city, the natives with their cutoffs and tanktops, flesh for sale in the land of Ugladu. It's a sex-driven city 'nights in the summer, anything goes an' if you listen real hard sometimes you can hear the jungle drums rapping out a beat deep along the sewers -- and the sidewalks are shakin' tonight. Check it out sometime.

CUT TO:

EXT. HARLEM - NIGHT

The RADIO BEAT is out on the street, dance carnivals, fire hydrants spewing water like the Place de le Concorde. There's a line outside a candy store -- when did you ever see a line outside a candy store? The juked-up black Hookers are wobbling around in circles, waiting for the next bite. Some of them are real good looking, too -- and that makes it sadder, somehow.

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SCUDDER VOICE (CONT'D)
They sit there and shuffle paper for twenty years and collect their half million dollar pensions. More arrests you make the more trouble you get into. Only hope is these new young cops coming in who don't remember what it was like. But when I look at them, I get depressed. A lot of things are depressing me. I sometimes think cops are the most depressed people I know -- but what do I know? Anyway, I quit the Force...

Matt descends the stairs of a graffiti-covered subway station and waits for one of the spray-painted trains.

INT. SUBWAY - NIGHT

A black Kid sits there, insolently lighting and smoking a cigarette against the law. Matt watches him, with a little litany.

SCUDDER VOICE
... which makes me sort of like a priest without a church. It was about the same time I broke up with Maureen. Everything started going -- the mortgage, the checkbook that wouldn't balance, the fights. I started drinking -- too much. One day Monsignor Flaherty's squad grabbed me -- I was still a cop then -- and sent me upstate to detox on their farm there. Now I'm okay. I drink a lot of Coca-Cola...

Matt gets off the subway and passes a corpse in a pile of crumpled shopping bags on the stairway, attended to by an Ambulance Team and a couple of Cops. They lift the body onto a stretcher, and we see the face of an old woman, her face bloated with alcohol.

SCUDDER VOICE
... Maureen kept the house out on the Island -- Syosset -- and Laurie, she's eight, she's out there with her, but she likes to come and stay with me in the city. That's a tough time. I take her to shows, ballgames, and I drive her back on Sunday... I got a lot of time now.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SCUDDER VOICE (CONT'D)
I like to walk around at night; I do small jobs here and there. I don't have a license, but people call me anyway, usually cops. I guess I could call myself a half-assed detective.

EXT. THE CHELSEA AREA - NIGHT

The West 20's on Ninth. Matt crosses the street toward a warmly-lit saloon called "Armstrong's." He's smoking a cigarette, he smokes too much... past some Sanitation Workers rolling the big gray cans along the sidewalks, wiping out another chapter in another night in the city.

END OF CREDIT MONTAGE.

INT. AMRSTRONG'S SALOON - LATE NIGHT

Matt walks in, knows some people, nodding or giving them a hand-signal, passing a BARMAID.

MATT
Hello, Aileen... Joe, howya doing?

BARMAID
Got your table, Matt.

MATT
Anybody been looking for me, honey?

BARMAID
No. Not yet. You want a Coke?

MATT
Yeah, a Coke's good.

As he proceeds to his table in his colorful Hawaiian tropical shirt, white socks, japanese-style pants, he doesn't look like a cop. He displaces the "Reserved" sign on the table and sits, winking at a pretty Girl who waves to him from another table. The crowd is made up of mostly artist-types, young, in fashion, good-looking people. The saloon dates back to the 19th Century, old wood, pictures of old baseball stars, fighters, flags. Matt's eyes shift to the front door.

SUNNY HENDRYX walks in. A tall, sexy blonde with heavy braids wrapped around her head. In a pair of tight jeans, Western boots, Armani jacket with shoulder padding. The Guys are radaring in on her, but she ignores them, talking to the Barman, who indicates Scudder.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She focuses on him, walks toward him. He watches her come. All six feet of her.

SCUDDER VOICE
I should've walked out then and there. But I guess it was the heat kept me stuck to the seat; it can drive you crazy sometimes, about 97 outside, and no breeze, and she must've been six feet tall and looked like a big ice cream cone...

As she moves, a lazy kinkiness to her body, a face like the prow of a Viking ship, wide, generous bones, aware of her effect on men, yet still shy about it. Not the cultivated poise of a mannequin, but the mannerisms of a gangly country girl who was too tall for her class. The smile is soft, the eyes are innocent and blue as any northern sky. Yet there's something overdone about her, either the makeup or the clothes. You sense she's either in show business or the horizontal business, but definitely not your working stiff.

SUNNY
Mr. Scudder?... I'm Sunny Hendryx. I'm a friend of Ellen's.

MATT
She called. Have a seat.

SUNNY
Thanks.

She sits down, fishes for a cigarette. He notices a funky-shaped green emerald in her left ear, just one -- like a pirate. Waitress comes over.

MATT
Something to drink?

SUNNY
Glass of white wine, please...

The Waitress goes. Sunny is nervous.

SUNNY
You know what I do, don't you? Same as Ellen.

MATT
So I gathered.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She toys with her earring, a mannerism of hers.

SUNNY
I want out.

MATT
Of the life?

SUNNY
Four years I've been doing it. I came here from Nebraska, August, 1980. I'm 23 years old. That's young, isn't it? I don't look like it, do I?
(as Matt says nothing)
When I got off the bus I had a suitcase in one hand, six hundred dollars and a denim jacket in the other. Now I'm wearing this...
(indicates her clothes)
I'd trade it for the old denim jacket if I could get the years back... Oh, that's bullshit! No, I wouldn't. I'm just rambling, I'm sorry.

MATT
What do you want to do? Go back to Minnesota?

SUNNY
Nebraska. No. There's nothing to go back to... I got a john. He's an accountant. He's offered me a job.

MATT
What kind of job?

SUNNY
Representing his interests. He's got clients in the emerald business in Columbia. I speak some Spanish, I get to travel, it's legitimate, and there's money in it. So why now?...

It sounds rehearsed. Matt looks at the green earring.

MATT
Is that what an emerald looks like?

She takes it off, shows it to him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNNY
Yeah, pretty, isn't it. I like green, it's fresh. Look closer.

She moves close, pressing her face and its scent near. He reacts.

SUNNY
The cloudy ones like that are from Columbia. The clear ones come from Brazil; they're not worth as much. You know how you tell it's the real thing?
(off his head shake)
... The good ones are flawed. See the little dark lines like cracks? They call them 'inclusions.' If they don't have 'em, they're fake...

He returns the earring.

MATT
Very pretty. Where do I come in?

SUNNY
Oh right. I have this pimp. I haven't told him.

MATT
You're afraid of him?...

SUNNY
Not really.

MATT
What does that mean?

She's nervous, her fingers playing with the earring.

SUNNY
He never threatened me. But I feel threatened.

MATT
Have other girls tried to leave?

SUNNY
I don't know. I don't know much about his other girls. He's very different from other pimps.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT
How?

SUNNY
More refined, smarter...

MATT
(skeptical)
What's his name?

SUNNY
Chance.

MATT
First name? Last name?

SUNNY
Just Chance.

MATT
What are you afraid of?

SUNNY
That he'd kill me or mark me or something. He's quiet, but violent. I don't know, maybe he'll talk me out of it -- I'm afraid, that's all, I'm afraid.

She seems to tremble with all her body, like a fawn, innocently, genuinely scared. Then she gets control of it, smokes another cigarette. Matt studying her. She leans forward, puts her fingers on his wrist.

SUNNY
I wish you'd help me, Matt?... Do you mind if I call you Matt?

It makes Matt laugh the way she asks it.

MATT
No. I don't mind.

SUNNY
I make money, but I don't get to keep much. But I have some.

She fishes in her bag for an envelope, hands it to Matt.

CONTINUED:

SUNNY
I have ten thousand there... You could see him for me.

Matt runs the hundred dollar bills past his eyes.

SUNNY
Five of it's for you. The other five I think Chance will take. Sort of a dowry.

MATT
It's too much -- for nothing.

SUNNY
Really, I look at it like the last month's security deposit -- something you forfeit when you move out.

They continue to talk as:

SCUDDER VOICE
... What she really was was a gorgeous questionmark with long legs and wide shoulders. I wanted to give the money back. But I was a few weeks out of Roosevelt Hospital where I had a relapse of my drinking problem, and I owed money there, and on the first my rent was due, and I hadn't sent anything to Maureen in God-knows how long...

INT. HARLEM BAR - NIGHT

Matt is talking with an ALBINO, Danny, in a crowded joint in Harlem.

SCUDDER VOICE
... so I said alright, even though her story about the john with the emeralds and South America sounded like crock and she was probably getting into some kind of exclusive hooking arrangement with the accountant guy -- but so what? Lot of people lie, they can't help it. I liked her face, and her money was as good as anybody else's and easier to come by. So I drifted into it...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALBINO
Chance? Yeah, I know him. He don't come here much. He don't hang out.

MATT
So they tell me. You don't like him?

ALBINO
(shrugs)
He ain't to like or not like. We got no business. He don't want to buy no stuff and I don't want to buy no pussy...
(smiles)
When you the man with all the candy, you don't never have to pay for no pussy.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Matt's talking with a BLACK HOOKER, very sexy, in a jazz club.

SCUDDER VOICE
Finding Chance wasn't so easy. It took me eighteen hours. He had an answering service and a code -- but he didn't return my calls... I found him finally through a mutual acquaintance that cost me a bill and a half...

BLACK HOOKER
(taking the money)
... he don't mess with black pussy no more, thinks he's superior or something, gonna take a fall too -- and sooner than he think, Chance... Check it out with Mambo B., he might know where he hanging his blade...

As Matt moves to the phone booth in the club.

INT. SUBWAY - NIGHT

Matt travels on a broken-down subway car, cargoing the late-night remnants of the city, including a preppy foursome in blazers and madras mini-skirts, obviously slumming.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Matt emerges in the Tribeca District, south of Soho.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Abandoned cobblestone streets, giant warehouses reflecting the light in expressionistic patterns. He comes abreast of an old warehouse, a few lights, no signs -- The "J" Club.

SCUDDER VOICE
... 'The J'. An after-hours joint down in Tribeca that specialized in ganja, reggae and noise, and judging from the level of it, must've been paying New York's finest plenty...

INT. THE J CLUB

Matt enters an old grilled elevator which takes him upstairs.

On the top floor of the building, a metal door is guarded by MISTER O, a middle-aged black guy with the eyes of Sonny Liston, two cool young black Guys with him.

MISTER O
You want something, honky?

MATT
Well, you must be Jackie O. Nice to meet you. I'm Matt Scudder. Mister B. sends his regards, says you might help me find a gentleman named Chance.

MISTER O
Yeah, he be around.

MATT
(slipping him a twenty)
He might be grateful you went and found him. A mutual profit awaits us.

Mister O gives him another look, harder. The Kids search him with metal detectors. Nothing. Mister O nods to the door Kid to let him in.

A bouncy Reggae Group is blasting the room out with sunshiney Rasta vibrations, the Dancers undulating like stalks of spaghetti.

Matt, followed by the Second Guy at the door, works his way to the packed bar -- the only white man in there, conversation dropping around him. In the mirror above the bar he sees them all looking at him. Pimps, drug dealers, gamblers, policy men...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SCUDDER VOICE
It was one of those kinds of places where everybody in the room's taken at least one felony bust. I was picturing Chance in a lime green suit with shoes made out of the skin of some reptile, probably an endangered species...

An older GUY at the bar in a pink suit crooks his finger at the Bartender.

BAR PATRON
Put it right in the same glass, my man. Let it build up a taste...

The Bartender fills his glass with a jigger of Hennessy and four ounces of cold milk. His eyes briefly flicker across Matt.

MATT
... Coco-Cola.

The eyes withdraw sullenly. Matt looks around, waits.

INT. BATHROOM

He goes to pee. A black marbeled interior. A 6'8" GUY with an afro, probably a basketball player, is snorting coke in the mirror; turns to Matt, in a basso profundo:

SIX FOOT EIGHT
Hi, howya doing?

Matt looks up at him from his urinal.

MATT
Hi... Fine.

INT. THE J BAR

Matt comes out, heads back to his place. CHANCE intersects him casual.

CHANCE
You the one looking for Chance?

Matt looks. No lime green suit, no. But a blue-gold thread of Italian cut. The face is scarred and impossibly beautiful, but sinister, heavy-lidded.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He's a lighter, caramel-colored type from Jamaica or one of the Islands, the accent a song-like lilt to it.

MATT
I got the feeling I'm looking at him.

CHANCE
Check it out, it don't strike twice in the same space, 'mun. Scudder right, you the 'mun been leaving messages on my service?

MATT
You didn't return the calls.

CHANCE
I don't call people I don't know. Life's too short.

MATT
You oughta take a chance once in a while.

Matt's eyes have drifted to his companion, passing Chance a drink. A face you remember. A long, straight nose, bisecting it like a knife, an androgynous, anything-goes quality. She's lithe, excellently dressed. SARAH ARMSTRONG, a lady to be reckoned with. In fact, she's so striking Matt can't take his eyes off her. Chance is amused. Matt finally takes his eyes off her.

CHANCE
Honey baby, say hello to Scudder here, a cop, right? Scudder -- Sarah Armstrong...

MATT
Ex... How do you do?

SARAH
Hi...

Her eyes say she's withholding judgment till Chance cues her one way or the other about him. As she sips her drink, we might, in passing, notice another green emerald set in a ring on her finger.

MATT
How do I meet somebody like you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SARAH
With money...

MATT
Yeah, well... Can we talk someplace quiet?

CHANCE
I don't got much time, 'mun. Dawn's coming up, y'know and I got to slip back in my coffin pretty soon.

MATT
... few minutes -- it'll change the course of your life.

CHANCE
Oh well, I'm always ready for that. Wait here, baby doll, anybody ask you to dance, tell them to die.

Looking at Matt as she says to Chance:

SARAH
Hurry back, darling, I don't like being alone...

As he leads Scudder out the back of the club. Matt glancing back at her. He's dying.

EXT. ROOF - NIGHT

They find themselves on the roof of the warehouse -- with a view of the Hudson, the World Trade Center and the grand panorama of Wall Street.

CHANCE
... so what's this about?

MATT
It's about Sunny Hendryx.

His eyes register it.

CHANCE
Oh? What about her?

MATT
She wants out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHANCE
Out? Out of what?

MATT
The life. The relationship she has with you. She wants you to agree to break things off.

He doesn't say anything.

CHANCE
What's she to you?

MATT
A friend.

CHANCE
What's that mean? You sleeping with her? You want to marry her? Friend's a big word, covers a lot of ground.

MATT
This time it's a small word, I'm doing her a favor.

CHANCE
She paying you for this favor?

MATT
Yes.

CHANCE
Shit! She could save herself the money telling me herself.

MATT
She's scared.

CHANCE
Scared of me? You mean I might disfigure her? Stub out cigarettes on her tits? Hang her from a building upside down?

MATT
Something like that.

Chance falls silent, stund, a proud man. He walks over to the edge of the parapet. Matt follows, taking out the envelope with the money.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT
There's five thousand dollars in there. She feels she owes you something.

Chance glances at it, shrugs.

CHANCE
... She can go. She don't need that.

MATT
Just like that?

CHANCE
Sure, just like that. I'm no white slaver. What's she think she is -- irreplaceable or something? The apartment's worth more to me than her. The buses are coming in every day, Scudder. And every day another one thinks there's gotta be a better way, y'know, than waiting tables or punching a cash register. I could open an office and take applications and there'd be a line around the block.

MATT
I'll tell her she won't be missed.

He turns to go.

CHANCE
What's she going to do? Stay in New York? Stay in the life? It's all she knows.

A lingering concern for Sunny in his tone.

MATT
I think she wants a fresh start.

CHANCE
(quizzical)
Sure, they all do... Tell her I'll be coming by to see her. Just to make sure this is really her idea.

MATT
I'll tell her.

He goes, leaving Chance at the parapet.

INT. DELICATESSEN - NIGHT

A cooler full of beer and wine. Matt wanders past, shopping along with some other, ragged-out, late-night New York characters.

SCUDDER VOICE
... I felt like a drink. In fact I wanted two ounces of pure vodka and I couldn't think of a single goddamn reason not to have it except it might put me back in the hospital. But that'd been the result of a serious, round-the-clock drinking bout. Still, I didn't quite trust myself yet. So I bought the papers, a pint of milk and a cheese danish and went back to my apartment in the West 20's...

EXT. SCUDDER APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

He approaches a remodeled apartment building in the Chelsea district, alongside a church.

SCUDDER VOICE
... they tell you not to drink for ninety days. You're supposed to go to ninety meetings in ninety days and stay away from the first drink one day at a time. I had my last drink Thursday night. I'd been to four meetings since then and if I went to bed now I'd have five days in... So?

INT. SCUDDER APARTMENT & LOBBY - NIGHT

He ambles past a large, old lobby filled with plants, past a sleeping Doorman, looks for his messages. None.

SCUDDER VOICE
... so I went back, ate the danish and read the papers. There's been twelve murders over the weekend.

He enters his apartment. Stark, but high-ceilinged, a warm brownstone feel. Newspapers, magazines, plants, books are littered around haphazardly. A portable television, sound systems, gym equipment, a casual, unfocused pattern to the furniture. Pictures of his daughter are the primary personal touch. The view out the window is a tree-lined street.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SCUDDER VOICE
... a couple of kids had a grudge against an attendant in a token booth in the subway who'd reported them for turnstile jumping, so they'd filled a fire extinguisher with gasoline, pumped it into the booth, and lit a match. The whole booth exploded, incinerating the woman.

CLOSE ON DAILY NEWS (LATER)

The headline reads -- "Too Hot!", with pictures of kids playing under a busted fire hydrant. PULL BACK TO REVEAL Matt is reading it, munching on his danish. His hair is wet from the shower, a towel around his waist, the fan stirring the muggy air, NOISES from the STREET floating in through the open window.

SCUDDER VOICE
Then there was the Post headline. A woman in Bellport, Long Island swerved her car to avoid hitting a dog. The dog made it and so did she, but her three kids didn't. Page one. They knew that would sell. Pity and Terror. People love to read about somebody else's bad luck...

The PHONE RINGS. He picks it up.

SUNNY (V.O.)
I got your message. You saw him?

INT. SUNNY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

She is naked in bed, talking to Matt on the phone. There's a television on.

INTERCUT phone conversation as needed.

MATT
We talked.

SUNNY
And?...

MATT
He's a pretty smart pimp...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SCUDDER VOICE
... I told her everything was alright, that Chance didn't seem too upset and was coming over, and if she was nervous about it I could hole up on her couch. She said, 'You think it's necessary?' I said, 'No, I don't think so' -- and I didn't. It seemed to me the guy was all business, like he said. I told her I'd stop by tomorrow. She said fine...

INT. SCUDDER APARTMENT - NIGHT

In the intercutting, we've moved the clock ahead, and Scudder's apartment is now dark and he's lying in bed with his eyes open. Occasional TRAFFIC SOUNDS and lights shoot past the open window.

SCUDDER VOICE
I got to bed around five. I lay there thinking about the twelve murders and the woman who'd lost her three kids that day and the woman who'd been incinerated, and I wondered why anyone would think it's a good idea to stay sober in the city... I had five days now.

He sleeps.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - DAY

Across the rooftops, a new day begins.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Matt walks into the basement entrance of an old, beautifully arched Catholic church.

SCUDDER VOICE
I woke early. I had a long overdue check for Maureen and I figured I'd take it out to Long Island personally. I had some time on my hands, and the closest meeting was in a church on 14th Street...

INT. BASEMENT ROOM - A.A. MEETING - DAY

Twenty Men and Women sit around a three-quarter circle listening to a fellow traveler.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Used coffee cups are everywhere, along with Coke and Doctor Peppers and oatmeal cookies. The speaker is a gentle-looking BUSINESSMAN with a bland face, thinning blond hair, a monotonous tone:

BUSINESSMAN
... I've been drinking since I've been fourteen. I married two times, divorced two times. Cracked up three cars, lost three jobs. Never saved any money, hit a few hospitals, never thought about it. Then one day I came here and I stopped. It was a couple years ago, and let me tell you -- ever since then things changed. I got a job -- in computer programming, I'm seeing a woman I like, I'm building a house in Jersey. I think... I think the reason is <u>things</u> didn't get better. <u>I</u> got better.

A modest man, a round of modest applause. As we move to Scudder watching from one of the chairs, an air of aloofness, hands resting across his drawn-up knee.

SCUDDER VOICE
They say that a lot. They say a lot of things a lot and you get to hear the same phrases over and over. But eventually it sinks in. I got six days in now. They say you got to take it one day at a time. I keep wanting to raise my hand and say something -- but shit, I got nothing to say.

A gruff, burly FIREMAN in his fifties with a huge drinker's nose, is talking, an Irish brogue.

FIREMAN
... The captain was an alcoholic, y'see, so he wanted other alcoholics around him. Any guy didn't drink, he'd get his ass transferred out. He used to say, 'Give me enough drunken firemen and I'll put out any fire there is.' And goddamn if we didn't! We'd do anything, we were so crazy drunk all the time, we'd climb into a burning gas furnace, a falling house, we just ate it up 'cause we were too goddamn drunk to be scared.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FIREMAN (CONT'D)
Well, when I came in here I thought it was to save my ass, but what I found out was my ass was attached to my soul...

More applause. He's finished. There's silence in the room, all eyes turning to Matt, waiting for him to qualify himself.

MATT
My name is Matt Scudder. I'll just listen today.

The eyes move on. We get the impression he wants to speak, but doesn't know how.

INT. A.A. MEETING (LATER)

The people are milling around, socializing during the break. A Man comes over with a basket of money and Matt puts in another couple of dollars, then helps himself to another cup of coffee. A black guy, JIM, strong features, in an old army jacket, comes over.

JIM
Good to see you again, Matt. Things going all right for you?

MATT
Oh, thanks, Jim. Yeah, everything's going fine.

JIM
Well, 'least you're here and you're sober. That's the important thing.

MATT
I suppose.

JIM
Any day I don't take a drink's a good day. You're staying sober a day at a time. The hardest thing in the world is for an alcoholic to not drink, and you're doing it.

MATT
Well, I'm trying...

EXT. MAUREEN'S HOUSE - DAY

Matt rings the doorbell of a Syosset, Long Island home.

SCUDDER VOICE
... And I am...

Maureen opens the door. She is an attractive, pug-nosed American sweetheart, bobbed short hair, barefoot, beginning to show lines of tension and age around her eyes.

INT. MAUREEN'S HOUSE - DAY

MATT
(awkward)
Hi...

MAUREEN
(surprised)
Matt?... Oh... you should always call first, Matt. You know that. I might've been out...

He hands her the check, stepping into the house. She looks at it, shocked.

MAUREEN
Three thousand dollars!

MATT
I got a job. Sorry it's not more...

MAUREEN
(moved)
It came at a good time, it's great, Matt. Thank you, thank you very much.

MATT
(looking around)
How's Laurie doing?

MAUREEN
She's at the dentist, getting braces.
(waves the check)
This'll help. She misses you.

MATT
I know. Maybe next Saturday. I'll take her to the park and a movie.

MAUREEN
She'd like that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

His eyes drift over the interior. A loneliness to it without him there. An absence of maleness. Too neat.

MATT
So would I...
(looking for the dog)
Where's Bandy?

Maureen looks at him strangely. He picks up on it right away.

MAUREEN
Matt, we spoke last week? You don't remember?

Pause. Matt feels a chill along his spine.

MATT
'Course I remember. What are you talking about?

MAUREEN
About Bandy. It was about Bandy.

MATT
So what about him?

It's obvious to her now he hasn't remembered a thing.

MAUREEN
He's dead... The vet said there was nothing he could do. They put him to sleep. On Friday...

Matt conceals his confusion, shaken not only by Bandy's death, but by his own amnesia.

MATT
Oh Jesus, I'm sorry -- he was a good dog, Bandy, a real good dog. What, he must've been twelve?

MAUREEN
He was fourteen...

There is a pause between them, the conversation parallelling their unspoken feelings. Matt senses she's on the verge of crying, reaches out, tries to touch her...

MATT
I'm sorry, Maureen...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAUREEN
Oh well... I called you because I wanted to tell somebody, and who else could I tell? Do you remember when we got him?

MATT
I remember.

MAUREEN
I wanted to call him Bandit, but we called him Bandy. It was short for Bandersnatch.

MATT
From 'Alice In Wonderland'. I remember...

MAUREEN
The vet said he didn't feel a thing. He just went to sleep. He was about 98 years old by human standards... The last year Laurie lost interest in him. That was the saddest part, Matt. She loved him when he was younger, but he grew up and he got old and she lost interest...

MATT
... Well, he had a good life anyway.

It sounds empty in his mouth. He feels suddenly depressed, eyes the liquor cabinet.

MAUREEN
... And he was such a good dog. Such a clown. He could always break me up...

MATT
Yeah, he was a good dog... Listen, Maureen, I'm on a case, I got to go, I just wanted to make sure you got that check... I'll see Laurie next week, I promise. I'll talk to you then. Okay?

Matt and Maureen look at each other.

MAUREEN
Okay, Matt...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He goes.

SCUDDER VOICE
... We liked each other, maybe we loved each other, but what's love? I don't know...

EXT. ARMSTRONG'S BAR - LATE DAY

Matt almost enters his favorite bar, but doesn't.

SCUDDER VOICE
... I think it's the feeling of wanting to do more for another person than for yourself. So half the time I was in love with Maureen, the other half I wasn't. It wasn't enough. I don't know, I just don't know... I felt like smoothing things over with just a shot of vodka...

He looks back at Armstrong's with considerable longing.

INT. TIMES SQUARE MOVIE HOUSE - DAY

Matt in a packed afternoon audience, mostly blacks.

SCUDDER VOICE
... but instead I killed time ducking into a Broadway theater. They had two reissue Clint Eastwood movies, one where he's a cop who settles things by shooting the bad guys. The audience looked like the people he was shooting. They cheered like crazy every time he blew somebody away...

EXT./INT. CAB - STREETS - NIGHT

Scudder, in his newly-pressed suit, catches a broken-down cab outside his apartment. The seat's got a gaping hole in the springs and sags to one side. The windows don't open.

SCUDDER VOICE
After that I got all dressed up like it was a first date or something and hopped a cab over to Sunny's. Cab driver -- Puerto Rican named Jesus Castro -- fell asleep at every red light.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The cabbie's this young, freaked-out-looking Puerto Rican who drives like he's escaping from demons, the cab rocking over every pothole, crumbling as he drives. He screeches to a stop at a red light and nods off, lids drooping. When it goes green, he takes off again as:

SCUDDER VOICE
... he'd wake up and hit the avenue like it was the Grand Prix, 'cept he'd hit every pothole on Ninth. He had this sign up that said, 'No Smoking. Driver Allergic', but the cab reeked of marijuana. It was an exciting drive through safari land, but I keep thinking I'm going to die any second. Which is why I like to do my own driving.

MATT
Jesus, you drive this thing like shit.

JESUS
Hunh?

EXT. SUNNY'S BUILDING - NIGHT

As Matt walks in, his eyes fall on a Spanish Doorman reading "El Diario". He's got a three-day growth of beard in a sweat-soaked shirt with no hat. Not exactly a top-of-the-line building, but...

INT. SUNNY'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Matt waits in the corridor. She opens the door, a big smile, in a slinky black dress, low cut, slit up the side, nylons, black heels, the green earring -- the works.

SUNNY
Oh Matt!

She embraces him, taking him by surprise. He feels the pressure of her thighs and breasts. All six feet two of her in heels. Restraining himself.

SUNNY
God I'm grateful to Ellen for telling me about you. You know what you are? You're my hero.

She ushers him into the apartment, moving to the living room.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT
I guess he was here.

SUNNY
Oh yes, this afternoon. Everything worked out beautifully, Matt. You want a drink?

MATT
No. A Coke's fine.

She moves across the living room to the kitchen. A RECORDING of solo jazz piano plays softly on the STEREO. A white angora cat peers cautiously around the corner.

SUNNY
... I don't know what you said to him, but whatever it was, it worked! He was so nice. You know, he seemed really hurt that I was scared of him? He said he'd never hold me against my will. You know something? He had me feeling guilty. And then he says, 'You know I never take a girl back,' and I thought God, I'm burning my bridges. Can you imagine?

Gives him the Coke as they move across to the couch in the living room.

MATT
I think so.

SUNNY
Because he's such a con artist. Like I'm walking away from a great job and forfeiting my stake in the corporate pension plan. I mean, come on.

She kicks off her shoes, folding one leg up beneath her on the couch, Matt noticing the rustle of her nylons. The CAT jumps up and rubs against her, PURRING. She picks it up, fondles it.

MATT
When do you have to be out of here?

SUNNY
End of the month. But I'll probably be gone before then. I mean there'd be people showing up. You know. Men.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT
Sure.

SUNNY
Packing's no big deal. None of this is me 'cept the Hopper poster. And 'Nebraska' -- that's what I call her, 'case I ever forget I guess. She's a good little pussy too, aren't you, sweetie pie?

She hugs her cat, their eyes falling on a framed poster of an Edward Hopper painting, advertising a show at the Whitney in 1981.

SUNNY
I picked it out at that show last year. I love his stuff. People together, but not together, looking off in different directions. It got to me... but that can stay too. I don't think I need the memories.

MATT
Where'll you live?

SUNNY
Someplace nice... near the park, midtown's too noisy...

Matt fishes out the envelope she gave him the night before. Pulls out the five thousand.

MATT
Before I forget --

She looks at it.

SUNNY
It seems there ought to be a bonus. Why don't you keep it? I can make a lot more now, believe me.

Matt, surprised, looks at the money, considering. Looks back at her.

MATT
No. You paid me enough. I didn't earn it.

He drops it in her lap. An expression of confusion crosses her face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNNY
I don't understand. You don't want the money? You did such a good job...

MATT
Let's just say the road to hell is paved with needing money. I take it, I'll start needing it.

She doesn't understand.

SUNNY
Well, if you ever do need it...? I... I might be needing some help -- in the future, I mean.

MATT
I'm available.

She puts the money aside.

SUNNY
... still seems like there oughta be a bonus.

They share a look, nothing more to say.

MATT
Are those contacts?

SUNNY
What? Oh, my eyes? That's their natural color. Blue, isn't it?

MATT
You have beautiful eyes...

SUNNY
You like them? What do you see when you look at them? Look closer, go ahead...

He leans closer.

SUNNY
You know you're very handsome, Matt. You're strong, I like that in a man.

Her eyes are challenging him, her mouth softened. He moves toward her, a little awkward, and she makes it easy, folding herself into his arms, kissing him on the mouth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He kisses her back. She starts undressing him.

SUNNY
You're so sexy... Would you like to fuck me, Matt?

MATT
From the first moment I saw you.

SUNNY
Then come fuck me in the bedroom.

As she gets up, partially undressing herself, leading him on to the bedroom:

SUNNY
Come on.

He goes like a pussy cat.

INT. SUNNY'S BEDROOM - A SERIES OF SHOTS - NIGHT

She takes his pants off on the bed, grabs him by the balls O.S.

SUNNY
Are there any little special things you like? I can do anything you want, Matt. You turn me on.

DISSOLVING TO:

Sunny peeling off her heels and nylons. Then taking her dress off. Rolling down her underpants, as she looks in Matt's eyes. The green earring is the only thing left.

SUNNY
You're so handsome, Matt. I want you to fuck me like you should, Matt, I want to feel you jerking between my legs.

DISSOLVING TO:

All six feet of her move down on him, giving him head. He starts down on her, his lips making contact with her breasts, her thighs swallowing him up.

DISSOLVING TO:

They're locked in a 69 position, writhing, sweating, bucking.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUNNY
Fuck me, go on and fuck me, Matt, fuck me hard.

DISSOLVING TO:

Matt on top of her, fucking the daylights out of her.

SUNNY
Harder! Harder!... Go on, Matt! Do it! Do it! Ooooh! Ooooh!

A prolonged gasp as she comes. Matt follows, slumps.

DISSOLVING TO:

He rolls off her, in a sweat, in dreamland. He's gone somewhere else. Sunny rolls up and smiles in his face.

SUNNY
Well now, that was nice, Matt.

She swings her legs off the bed, fiddling with a razor and a small mirror with some lines of cocaine on it. She snorts.

He lies there, drifting in the wine light. His eyes shift lazily to the white cat washing himself on a boudoir chair, over to the stacks of emerald jewelry on the makeup table -- necklaces, rings, pins, everything in green. Sunny's voice drifting back in:

SUNNY
Want some?

MATT
No.

SUNNY
You know most of my clients are into domination scenes, you know, 'cause of my size. They like me dressed up in black. You want to see my closets? There's all sorts of things in there... are you into that at all, Matt? If you are, tell me, don't be ashamed...

Spoken like a pro, a coy questioning smile, trying to please the client. Yet it only adds to Matt's sense of desolation. He smiles back, makes light of it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT
No, thanks, not today, but you never know. I don't want to be rigid about it...

SUNNY
(laughs)
... maybe some other time when you're not so shy.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Matt, dressed, steps out, as Sunny follows, pulling on a sexy red and black-striped Japanese bathrobe, her tits swinging.

SUNNY
Will you call me?

MATT
Sure...

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE APARTMENT

Matt steps out. She lingers at the door in her bathrobe.

SUNNY
Thank you for coming over, Matt... You don't know how happy you've made me, Matt, I'm so happy... Oh, Matt?

She impulsively pulls the green earring off and presses it into his hand.

SUNNY
Look, I know this is crazy, but I'd like you to have this.

MATT
I told you you paid me enough.

SUNNY
I know, but this is from me... just something to remember me by, okay?

There is this unfeigned little girl moment of light peeking through her face, a genuine warmth -- as she closes the door.

SUNNY
... Good night, Matthew.

EXT. CHINATOWN STREETS - THAT NIGHT

Matt, a real satisfied look on his face, is moving past the outdoor fish stalls, weighing huge bluefish and marlins. Chinatown's like an ant colony; there's not a foot of concrete not being stepped on.

SCUDDER VOICE
... We didn't kiss on the way out. I was thinking of what she'd said, 'It seems like there ought to be a bonus.' That's as good a word as any... They tell you at the meetings to stay out of bars...

As he turns into one of the many little restaurant/cocktail bars on a sidestreet.

INT. CHINATOWN BAR - NIGHT

Matt is sitting at a dark mahogany bar nursing another Coca-Cola. A beautiful, air-cooled place, dark, soothing black colors, screens, jade pieces... A Bartender watching a turned-down ballgame on the television.

SCUDDER VOICE
... but I always liked them. 'Specially in the summertime. They're cool and dark. And if I'm going to drink I'll drink and it doesn't matter where I am...

A CHINAMAN comes over, taps Scudder on the back in a friendly manner, the gesture of an owner. He has his index finger positioned in a circle with his thumb.

CHINAMAN
Hey Scudder, do this... go ahead.

Scudder does it.

CHINAMAN
Now put it on your chin. Like this.

He puts it against his cheek, which Scudder does, the natural thing to do. The Chinaman laughs.

CHINAMAN
That's not your chin, Scudder.

MATT
Very good, Benny, very good. What about rubbing your stomach and your head at the same time...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHINAMAN
Oh sure, I can do that.

Does it, the enthusiasm of a child. They sit together, chattering.

SCUDDER VOICE
My friend Benny Ang -- rich as Croesus, loves to laugh. Once he loaned me a couple thousand when I was in a spot -- thinks I should go into security work, protect his chain of restaurants in Chinatown, but I told him I don't like working for the Tongs, which I would be. I don't like groups, gangs, associations, organizations, movements or cliques. It's hard to keep a straight job these days...

As Benny laughs, patting him one more time and moving on.

EXT. STREET AND NEWSSTAND - NIGHT

Walking past a Street Clown miming Matt's walk.

SCUDDER VOICE
I was feeling pretty good. Seven days without booze. When was the last time that happened? Fifteen years ago? Twenty? My body was coming alive again. Maybe this was what they called a 'natural high.' I liked it. ... Funny how good I felt after a couple hours with a whore and how bad I felt after seeing my ex... Maybe I should spend more time with whores...

Matt, a carton of milk in a brown paper bag, buys the morning papers at a late-night kiosk; The Times, News, Post, a couple magazines. The streets are slowing down.

SCUDDER VOICE
... It'd been a good night. A riot at the Diana Ross concert in Central Park. About two hundred kids went on a rampage, mugging and robbing anyone in their path...

Glancing through the inside pages of The Daily News as he strolls back to his apartment. We see the headline: "Riot at Diana Ross Concert"... Past a bag lady asleep in a doorway. Past two Spanish hookers at the corner rapping.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SCUDDER VOICE
... On page two, a mother shot her eighteen-year-old son to death when he didn't clean up his bedroom... On page three, a Jordanian immigrant with five kids, Abdullah Abdullah, was killed in his candy store in the Bronx. Two kids. The guy'd been over here three years and was working eighteen hours a day to make ends meet. I don't know. Maybe if he hadn't worked so hard, he wouldn't have been there at two in the morning. Sometimes you just got to know when to quit. You pick up The New York Times, you don't see these stories much, they write about the murders everywhere else in the world, from Beirut to Burma, then you read the News and you realize Beirut's right here -- in the heart of the city. Our city. The world's gone mad with murder.

He freezes at the curb, a cab speeding by, eyes riveted to a new page. We MOVE IN.

There's a photograph of Sunny Hendryx, a model pose, and next to it her epitaph: "East Side Call Girl Tortured To Death In Luxury Apartment".

Scudder is stunned, really stunned. He reads it again, talking out loud to himself, shaken, not even aware.

MATT
Oh fuck! He killed her! The motherfucker killed her! Oh God! God!

The whores looking at him strangely.

INT. PHONE BOOTH - STREET - NIGHT

He's on the phone, speaking, the same dazed expression.

MATT
Yeah, Chance -- yeah Chance... Check the J Club, Duane Street, he goes there...
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT (CONT'D)
(pause)
Tomorrow. I'll come in then.

He hangs up, at a loss. At a complete loss.

SCUDDER VOICE
There was nothing else I could do except look for Chance myself -- but I was thinking what I'd do when I found him. I went over to Armstrong's instead.

INT. ARMSTRONG'S SALOON - THAT NIGHT

Matt slouches at the bar -- the same place where Sunny first appeared. The density is thinning out now and he stares at his Coca-Cola with hostility.

SCUDDER VOICE
... I'd told her she was gonna be all right. And she believed me. And now she was gone. All six feet of ice cream. Melted in the August heat.

He's signalled the barmaid, who comes over.

MATT
Give me a double Stolichnaya, straight up. Make it icy.

BARMAID
(concerned)
You sure, Matt?

MATT
Why shouldn't I be sure?

BARMAID
Well, you haven't been drinking. Are you sure you want to start?

MATT
What do you have to do to get a drink around here? Have a philosophical debate with the bartender?

BARMAID
Don't take it that way, Matt.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT
Don't tell me how to take it, Fran. Don't give me that shit. Give me the drink, okay.

BARMAID
(goes)
It's your life...

MATT
It sure is.

SCUDDER VOICE
It was no big deal. I didn't even feel the drink at first, and then what I experienced was a vague headache and nausea... Well, my system wasn't used to it, I'd been away seven days...

Underneath this, the barmaid puts down the icy vodka glass in front of him. It stares up at Scudder like a beckoning swimming pool. He reaches down -- takes that first sip. Heaven in his face.

SCUDDER VOICE
At the meetings they tell you the first drink's the one gets you drunk. Well, maybe that's true for an alcoholic, but I'm not an alcoholic. I never was. I read somewhere once in a medical journal a drink or two's the best thing for your heart. Long as you don't go over that. So maybe I can limit myself to two drinks a day. Make it a game. I think I can handle two drinks a day.

He takes another long sip.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - DAWN

New day. City life.

SCUDDER VOICE
I woke up feeling rocky and had an eye opener of vodka. It was a good feeling. I went over to Sunny's; I can act like a sonufabitch cop when I have to and I dummied my way in past the doorman...

INT. SUNNY'S APARTMENT - A SERIES OF JUMPCUTS

Matt following the bloodstains through the apartment. A couple Technicians are still there cleaning up, barely taking notice of Matt. The Hopper poster on the wall. The bed where they made love. He pauses. A half-empty vodka bottle on the dresser. He approaches it... wants it.

SCUDDER VOICE
They'd taken a thousand latent fingerprints. Of a thousand different johns, and I could breathe her all over the place, but the only thing I really noticed was the vodka bottle. It caught me flatfooted and made me want it. I could feel it working down my throat. I got out of there.

He walks out the front door. On the way to the elevator:

SCUDDER VOICE
... the only other thing I noticed was 'Nebraska' the white cat was gone...

EXT. MOROVIAN CHURCH - DAY

Matt enters this striking-looking Russian Orthodox church.

SCUDDER VOICE
... I skipped over to an A.A. meeting. They go on all day and night all over the city, just like bookie parlors, you get addicted to them... I couldn't get over how well I was controlling my drinking.

INT. CHURCH ROOM - DAY

About fifteen people. The speaker is this fierce-looking mustached guy in his thirties who looks like he's seen hell and remembered it.

YOUNG GUY
... four years, sober as a duck, and you know what happens in those four years? My youngest son gets killed by a hit-and-run driver, my marriage breaks up, I been on extended unemployment and I've had several bad clinical depressions, okay? <u>But I didn't drink</u> -- did I?
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

YOUNG GUY (CONT'D)
'Cause when I came in here you people said nothing's so bad a drink won't make it worse. You told me not to drink even if my ass falls off. Well, my ass has fallen off, but I think I stay sober on sheer, fucking stubborness!

A round of spontaneous applause at his certainty. CAMERA MOVING over Matt in his normally detached position.

SCUDDER VOICE
I don't know about him, but on two drinks a day I was feeling pretty good and a lot less angry. Maybe I should raise my hand and tell them. But I could see the reaction. Knowing looks, laughter. Sure you're controlling it, Matt, you think you are but...

A WOMAN EXECUTIVE, well-tailored, in her late thirties, speaks. The face was once very pretty.

WOMAN EXECUTIVE
I always thought once you stop drinking, that's it. Well, it's not that easy. I quit seven times. This is my eighth time. And every time I went back to the bottle, it was because I got cocky, I got brash. I starting thinking I could control it, I thought I could be a social drinker -- you know, a couple of glasses of wine, a vodka here and there. Another month of that and I was back to a bottle a day, and there I was all over again...

Matt's half-listening, the voice drifting off, CAMERA CLOSING on him.

SCUDDER VOICE
I was thinking, my name is Matt and I'm an alcoholic. And there's a woman got killed just the other night and it's eating at me and I don't know what to do about it.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SCUDDER VOICE (CONT'D)
There's a bar on every corner and a liquor store on every block, and drinking won't bring her back to life, but staying sober won't either, and why the hell do I have to go through this? We sit around in these goddamn rooms and say things like 'Easy does it.' 'One day at a time.' 'My worst day sober is better than my best day drunk.' And everybody nods like a plastic dog on a Puerto Rican's dashboard and the world is coming to an end... I feel like saying help me... please somebody help me, I'm an alcoholic...

There is silence in the room. The SPONSOR in charge of the meeting is looking considerately at Matt.

SPONSOR
You raised your hand?

Matt catches himself. He must've unconsciously raised his hand. How the hell could he do that? He looks around at the faces, waiting for him to speak.

MATT
Uh... my name is Matt. Thanks for letting me listen to you all today, it's very interesting, but... I think I'll just listen today.

The eyes move on.

INT. COP BAR & RESTAURANT - DAY

CLOSE on a glass of bourbon. Matt's eyes follow it to the lips of JOE DURKIN. In front of Matt is a Coca-Cola, which he resents.

DURKIN
... The bastard stabbed her twelve times with a gravity knife, then he cut her throat, then he pulled her tongue out through her windpipe and left it hanging there for us. Sick, hunh? You're lucky you're seeing it in black and white. Blood all over the place. Never seen so much blood.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Matt says nothing. Flipping through a grotesque series of photographs. Of Sunny. Her wrists are tied together to a doorknob in the bedroom -- tortured in the end. Scudder looks away, experiencing a wave of nausea.

MATT
... Blood... He must've had blood on his clothes when he left?

DURKIN
Doorman didn't see a thing.

MATT
The tongue -- why? It's got to mean something?

DURKIN
Coroner says he saw it before. Remember the 'Magnificent Seven' murders last year? Bunch of Dominican coke dealers in a basement in the Bronx? Two of them were done up that way. Means you've talked too much, you sold them out. A '<u>chivato</u>'...

MATT
So why does a black pimp use a Spanish code?

DURKIN
Who cares! A coked-up spade... do anything, 'cept now we got to call 'em EDP'S, you know what that means -- Emotionally Disturbed Persons. We don't want to hurt their feelings see. That's what some asshole on Centre Street's got nothing better to worry about, right? The whole city's up to its ass in fruitcakes and our first priority is how we refer to them. Jesus!...

Joe Durkin sips on his bourbon. A white Irish cop, wavy handsome hair, he could be a male model for a rugged Irishman were he not starting to go to fat, the beer gut coming on, the jawline dissolving.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DURKIN
(bitter)
... this 'EDP sonufabitch waltzes in with this smart Jew lawyer with the hairs growing out of his nostrils with an alibi like an umbilical cord and tries to sue us for arresting him. Violating his right to cut somebody up. You practically need a photo of the guy these days committing the crime to get a conviction, and then you get a reversal 'cause you were violating his civil right taking his photograph without prior permission...
(to Matt)
Whaddaya want?

Waitress comes over. Matt hesitates.

MATT
Uh... beer with a chaser. Vodka.

DURKIN
(bourbon)
Same...

She goes. The bar is packed with a mid-day New York lunch crowd, mostly tough-looking guys in white collar clothing carrying pieces -- detectives -- with a few secretaries mixed in and comely Irish waitresses.

DURKIN
So who gives a shit! Some dumb little bitch comes fifteen hundred miles to peddle her ass, who cares if he chopped her up or not? I mean why didn't she stay in fucking Minnesota...

MATT
Nebraska...

DURKIN
All right, Nebraska... So what's this about, Scudder? You don't have a license, but Guzik says talk to you. Who's the client anyway?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Waitress brings the drinks. Matt watching it. The foam on the beer. The vodka chaser.

MATT
The deceased...

DURKEN
(gets it)
Oh... friend?

MATT
I knew her... I liked her.

A muscle works alongside Durkin's jaw, chewing it over.

DURKIN
Once a priest always a priest -- right?

Durkin reaches for his drink. Matt for his. They make a motion of toasting each other, then drink.

DURKIN
... You know the murder rate used to be around a thousand a year. Three a day in the five boroughs. That was high. Now it's about five a day, higher in the summer -- fourteen of them two Fridays ago. And there's ten thousand less cops on the street than twelve years ago. And even when I can catch one of these fuckers, I can't even get him on a court calendar it's so jameed up, everybody's so worried about the rights of some asshole who strangled and raped some 85-year-old bag lady, fuckin' city...

MATT
You read about the 81-year-old guy in Queens yesterday with the bow and arrow?

DURKIN
Yeah, something about a dog shitting on the wrong lawn.

MATT
Guy sees his 75-year-old neighbor walking his dog.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT
Done it there every day for years. Yesterday he goes and gets his bow and arrow, shoots at the dog, misses. The dog guy gets mad, runs back in, gets his Walther P-38 from World War Two and shoots the bow and arrow guy dead.

DURKIN
Something like that. You hear about the Czechoslovakian plasterer last week? He wants to go to the movies with his girlfriend, but he's so tired of paying for the babysitter, the dumb jerk smothers her two-year-old daughter instead?

They laugh in a disgusted way.

MATT
How 'bout the Ukranian widow? Couple weeks ago. She found a TV on the street, brought it home, plugged it in, and it blew her up?

DURKIN
(laughs)
You don't know where it's gonna come from anymore. Total strangers are killing each other, everybody's got a piece. They don't even stop and think anymore. My sister got mugged right? I said to her, hey all that happened was he took your money. Why make a federal case out of it, right? Be grateful you're alive. Go home, say a prayer of thanks... Guzik says you been off the force couple of years? It's wacko time out there. You don't know, Scudder.

Durkin's voice faded under:

SCUDDER VOICE
It was turning into a typical alcoholic's conversation with two drunks taking polite turns talking aloud to themselves, but I noticed he started liking me more when I went from a Coke to a beer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DURKIN
Y'ever ride the subways?

MATT
When I have to.

DURKIN
Well shit, who rides it by choice. It's the whole city in a nutshell. People smoking marijuana down there, a transit cop tells him to put it out, they shoot him. Graffiti, shit all over the place, derailments, it stinks, you name it, right. Well I get on a subway and I look around and you know where I think I am? I think I'm in a fucking foreign country! Everybody's black or Spanish or Chinese, now they got the goddamm Koreans running the vegetable stands all over the city... Oh shit, I know it sounds ignorant and bigoted, but I can't help it. This used to be a white city and now there's days when I feel like I'm the only white man left in it.

A silence. The place has thinned out.

DURKIN
Everybody with any brains knows the solution, but nobody's got the guts to do it.

MATT
What's that?

DURKIN
Bring back the chair. Hell, the public wants it. You fry one of these bastards and I tell you one thing for sure -- he's not gonna do it again. The balance of terror works, buddy, and don't forget it. You want to know something?

MATT
What?

DURKIN
We got the death penalty.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DURKIN (CONT'D)
Not for murderers. For ordinary citizens. We get the death penalty six, seven times a day.

MATT
You're spinning your wheels, Joe, that's the way it is...

Durkin ignores it, finishes off his bourbon, glances at his watch. Matt, unconsciously, looks at his wrist. He has no watch.

DURKIN
(intones)
Yup. There are eight million stories in the naked city. You remember that program? Used to be on television some years back.

MATT
I remember.

DURKIN
They had that line at the end of every show. 'There are eight million stories in the naked city. This has been one of them.'

MATT
I remember it.

DURKIN
Eight million stories. You know what you got in this city, this fucked-up toilet of a naked fucking city? You know what you got? You got eight million ways to die.

EXT. COP BAR - STREET - DAY

Matt and Durkin emerge into the overpowering glare of the scorching sun, Matt putting on some shades. They shake hands.

MATT
You okay?

DURKIN
What are you, a cop?...
(giggles)
What are you a cop?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

His mood suddenly shifts and gets ugly as he thrusts his jaw out at Matt, points in his face, his voice low and hard.

DURKIN
Listen, don't be so goddamn superior, y'understand? You sanctimonious bastard. You're no better'n I am, you son of a bitch.

He turns and walks away, leaving Matt standing there wondering what he's talking about. He looks left, right, trying to decide what to do. Suddenly he goes back into the bar.

INT. COP BAR - DAY

Matt walks in, sits down on a barstool, motions to the Bartender.

SCUDDER VOICE
He didn't know how right he was. I went back into the saloon and sat at the bar. There was no reason why really. I didn't need a drink, but I wanted one. So why not have one? When you think about it, what's the big difference between two and three drinks? So I had one. No big deal...

He drinks. His point of view -- the Bartender.

SCUDDER VOICE
... I remember the bartender had a shiny bald head, and I remember him pouring the drink and I remember picking it up... That's the last thing I remember...

INT. DETOX WARD - DAY

Matt wakes up suddenly in a hospital bed, his face bruised from a fall, a massive hangover slapped on it, he looks like a sick worm in a mescal bottle.

MATT
Oh shit... where the fuck...

SCUDDER VOICE
It was Monday. I couldn't remember anything after I picked up that third drink Friday afternoon.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SCUDDER VOICE (CONT'D)
I'd had blackouts for years. Sometimes I'd lose the last half hour of the night. Sometimes I'd lose a few hours. I'd never lost two whole days before...

Matt gets out of bed, a fresh bandage attached to his scalp, surrounded by other alcoholics snoring it off, his stomach coming up through his throat. An INTERN approaches him and starts to argue with him.

SCUDDER VOICE
... They didn't want to let me go, they wanted to keep me in detox for a full five days...

INTERN
Where you going, mister? The booze isn't even out of your system yet. You'll walk around the corner and pick up a drink five minutes after you get out of here.

MATT
No I won't.

INTERN
You just went through detox here a couple weeks ago. It's on your records. We cleaned you up and how long did you last?

Matt does not reply.

INTERN
You know how you got here? You had a convulsion -- a full-scale, grand mal seizure. Ever have one of those before?

MATT
Sure. When I get depressed.

The intern takes him by the shoulders, intense, a small, dark-eyed man of Arabic origin, an accent, deadly serious.

INTERN
Knock off the bullshit! Listen to me, buddy! You keep on drinking, you're going to have another convulsion!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

INTERN (CONT'D)
Maybe not the first drink or the second, but sooner or later you're going to die from it. You're gonna fall on your face in some goddamn street and this time nobody's gonna get to you in time.

MATT
Stop it.

DRUNK
Shaddup over there!

INTERN
No, I won't stop it. Why the hell should I stop it? Look at me! You're an alcoholic. If you drink, you'll die.

Matt looks into the intern's eyes. He does not doubt the man's sincerity.

MATT
Where do I sign out?

The intern gives up.

INTERN
Then you'll be signing out AMA. Against Medical Advice.

MATT
Then that's what I'll do.

INTERN
(shrugs, cheerful)
Suit yourself. But next time do me a favor, go fall on your face closer to some other hospital and die there, okay?

MATT
There won't be a next time.

He walks past the intern toward the sign-out desk, still in hospital garb. The intern calling after him:

INTERN
Oh, there'll be a next time alright, there always is. You walk outta here, mister, you're a dead man! I guarantee it.

Matt walks on.

INT. MATT'S APARTMENT - DAY

Scudder's clothes are filthy and stained with blood from his fall. He examines his head wound in the mirror, one eye on a half-full bottle of Stolichnaya on the bureau.

SCUDDER VOICE
... They stitched up my scalp somewhere along the line, but I didn't know where or how...

He now pours the vodka down the sink, rinses out the bottle, and puts it in the trash.

SCUDDER VOICE
Now either I drink or I die. I passed the first test, that was easy.

The PHONE RINGS. Matt answers it.

MATT
Scudder here...

CHANCE (V.O.)
(pause, soft)
I been looking for you under all the rocks in town, never figured the detox ward. Scudder... want to speak to you.

MATT
Speak.

CHANCE (V.O.)
No. Want to see your face, look in your eyes, see if they're still there ... I'm downstairs, I'm in your lobby.

MATT
(grudging)
Five minutes...

He hangs up, sits on the bed, opens a drawer in the bedside table and takes out a gun. He holds the gun in his hand for a moment, then changes his mind and puts it back in the drawer.

INT. ARMSTRONG'S - DAY

Matt and Chance continue to size each other up, Matt over coffee, Chance drinking a rum cola, Matt trying to avoid looking at it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHANCE
You still think I killed her, don't you?

MATT
What's it matter what I think?

CHANCE
A whole roomful of people can account for my time that night. I wasn't anywhere near Sunny's.

MATT
That's handy.

CHANCE
What's that supposed to mean?

MATT
Whatever you want it to mean.

CHANCE
You're saying I could've hired it done.
(off Matt's shrug)
Maybe I could've. But I didn't. Why would I?

MATT
Maybe to terrorize the other girls who might want to leave?

He doesn't believe it even as he says it.

CHANCE
Sure. 'Cept I don't work that way, I told you that, Scudder. No racehorse's worth holdin' 'gainst her will. I can get new ones. I ain't gonna lose it over some dumb chick like Sunny... 'Sides, my business is hurtin' already. I told my girls not to take any hotel tricks or new johns if there's something funny about them. I figger maybe somebody's trying to get at me through them.

MATT
If you say so.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Chance laughs, frustrated.

CHANCE
You something, Scudder... you went to bed with her, didn't you?

Out of left field. Matt looks at him.

CHANCE
How else would Sunny say thank you? Whore's coin. But you let her down, Scudder. She counted on you and when the shit came down, where were you? Lying in your own piss and shit -- on the way to detox, that's where.

Matt grabs him, sudden, hauls his face across the table, about to smack him. But Chance looks back at him... defiant.

CHANCE
You working out your guilt, motherfucker?

Matt moves as if to slug him, but checks himself. Realizes he's the one who's lost it. He releases him. Chance notches the victory.

MATT
Get outta my face! I'm no cop. No more. I got nothing to do with Sunny Hendryx. And I don't give a damn.

A nervous gesture from Matt. He eyes the rum and Coke as it crinkles icily down Chance's smiling throat.

CHANCE
I think you do... I think you do give a damn... That's why I'm here...

He slips an envelope fat with money from his inner coat pocket and shoves it across the table to Matt.

CHANCE
So let's cut the crap, Scudder. I'll make it easy for you. Five thousand now. And ten thousand more when you find the killer... But don't fuck this one up...

Matt looking at the money.

CONTINUED:

MATT
I don't get it -- what the fuck do you care! She walked out on you.

Getting up to leave.

CHANCE
No one knew that, now did they? Far as the world knows somebody killed a woman of mine. And nobody should be able to do that and get away with it, now should they, Scudder? It's bad for business and bad for my respect. And yours, too...
(pauses)
Respect, 'mun -- respect.

A word that cuts both ways. Spoken in a quiet, certain manner that echoes in Matt's eyes. Chance reads it, his Cheshire cat grin.

MATT
And what if it's you?

CHANCE
Then you're gonna have problems collecting the back end, aren't you? Makes you work harder, don't it...
(as he leaves)
Think about it. Call me.

Matt stares at the money, sighs.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Matt moving along a crowded East Side sidewalk. Past the Peddlers pushing wares from streetside stands. A black guy tags along with him, trying to sell him a watch. Matt, perusing it as he walks, points out that it's a fake, returns it to him. The guy feigning hurt.

SCUDDER VOICE
... I had a date with the first of Chance's racehorses. Her name was Ruby Lee. I didn't get into asking her specialties...

INT. RUBY LEE APARTMENT - DAY

Ruby Lee opens her door to Matt.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A beautiful Chinese woman of indeterminate age, with majestic black hair in a black sheath dress with a slit skirt, her expression is like ice as she shows him into a tasteful apartment with an Oriental cast, Japanese prints in black laquered frames, bamboo screens.

SCUDDER VOICE
... but I figured it was raking the backs of her victims with those diamond-studded nails or maybe roasting their testicles over a bunson burner. She was the real thing. No expression. Ice water in her veins...

CLOSE ON HER LONG TURQUOISE NAILS

with little diamonds set in the centers of them.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Matt's eyes on them as she serves him tea, then seats herself quite properly. They talk.

SCUDDER VOICE
She wasn't much help. She'd been with Chance a year, found their arrangement comfortable, probably stole as much as she could from him and one day would probably go back to Macao and open an opium den.

MATT
(leading her)
... but do you think she could've had a boyfriend? Somebody special. An accountant. Maybe somebody with connections in Latin America... Columbia?

RUBY
(puzzled)
As I told you, we partied with hundreds of men, mister. How would I remember one man? They all got the same two heads with their clothes off... but I don't understand. Why would a woman like her want two men in her life? She'd have to give money to both of them, no?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT
... But she might've had a different kind of relationship with a boyfriend. Maybe he was giving her gifts?

Ruby seems baffled by the idea.

RUBY
You mean a customer?

MATT
... That's possible, yes.

RUBY
But a customer's not a boyfriend. He's just another man. How could she feel anything for a customer?

INT. DONNA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - STAIRCASE - SAME DAY

Matt negotiates his way up a stairwell, cluttered with bicycles, in a refurbished Village brownstone.

DONNA is waiting for him in the doorway, barefoot, jeans, no nail polish, jewelry or makeup -- a fresh luminiscent quality, attempting not to look hooker-like, but with that essence.

DONNA
Three flights and you're worn out already? You're not in great shape, are you? Hi, I'm Donna. Come in.

INT. DONNA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Cozy, bohemian, filled with plants, African masks, optically clever posters, little antique objects d'art all over the place. Matt seating himself, they're talking, she brings him a Coca-Cola. Over this:

SCUDDER VOICE
Donna was a racehorse of another temperament. Yes, she'd shared some johns with Sunny, but nothing special. No psychos, no freaks. She didn't even know Sunny was planning on leaving Chance...

DONNA
Well I can understand that. He didn't really care for her, you know.

CONTINUED:

MATT
Oh? What makes you think so?

DONNA
It's a feeling I picked up.

MATT
Does he have a feeling for any of the other girls?

DONNA
Oh he takes care of them, y'know Chance, he gets the apartments, pays off the buildings, keeps the names and the numbers moving around... he's smooth with everybody, Chance. But his real feeling is for me.

She giggles when she sees Matt's look.

MATT
Why are you laughing?

DONNA
Oh, I was just thinking I'm the typical dumb hooker, thinks she's the only one the pimp loves. But you know what it is? I'm the only one he can really relax with, take his shoes off and just talk. Do you know what a karmic tie is?

MATT
Sort of.

DONNA
Sometimes I think we're reincarnated or something. Like we were brother and sister in another life.

She fishes out a joint from a jewel box.

DONNA
You mind if I smoked a quick joint? Just to unwind a little.

MATT
Go ahead.

DONNA
Because I've got this stockbroker friend coming over in a little while and it'll help me be in the mood.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DONNA (CONT'D)
It won't take longer than an hour, will it?

MATT
No, that's fine.
(as she lights it)
Nice apartment. A little different, isn't it, than the usual place?
(off her puzzled frown)
Most girls live in doorman buildings.

DONNA
(grins)
That's true. This is something different, alright... You see, the johns who come here, they don't think they're johns.

MATT
How do you mean?

DONNA
They think they're friends of mine. They think I'm this spacey Village chick, which I am, and that they're my friends, which they are. I mean, they come here to get laid, let's face it, but I'm not a hooker. I'm a girlfriend. I don't get paid. They give me money 'cause I got rent to pay and, you know, I'm a poor little chick who wants to make it as an actress and's never going to. Which I'm not, and I don't care much, but I still take dancing lessons twice a week and I have an acting class with Ed Kovens on Thursday night and I was in a showcase last May for three weekends in Tribeca. We did Mamet, 'Sexual Perversity in Chicago', and do you believe that three of my johns came?

She's smoked the joint all the way down, offering it to Scudder, who shakes his head.

MATT
Do you think Sunny might've had a boyfriend?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DONNA
I have boyfriends. Sunny had tricks. All of the others have tricks. You want to know something? I'm the only one Chance loves.

The grass is talking. The room is starting to smoke up.

MATT
Maybe Sunny had someone who wasn't just a john?

DONNA
You mean that's why she wanted to split with Chance?

MATT
It's possible.

DONNA
And then he killed her?

MATT
Chance?

DONNA
No. Chance wouldn't care, shit. The boyfriend.

MATT
Why?

DONNA
'Cause he's on the spot. She leaves Chance, there she is, all ready for happily ever after and what does he want with that? He's an accountant, got a wife, job, family, he's got a house in Scarsdale.

MATT
(alert)
How do you know all this?

DONNA
I'm just speedballing, honey. I'm just throwing chalk at the blackboard. It's kicky being in love with a hooker, that way you get it for free, but you don't want anybody turning your life around.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DONNA (CONT'D)
She says hey I'm free now, let's ditch the wife and run into the sunset and the sunset's something he watches from the terrace at the country club and he wants to keep it that way. Next thing you know, zip, she's dead and he's back in Larchmont.

MATT
Who would he be?

DONNA
(goes blank)
The boyfriend? I don't know. Anybody.

The PHONE RINGS.

DONNA
Uh, excuse me... Oh hi, Kim, hi, wait a minute, will you?
(puts the phone down)
I really don't know about that, Matt.

MATT
All right...

Realizing the interview is over, Matt gets up to leave. She accompanies him to the door.

DONNA
Hey Matt, I'm really glad you came over. Anytime you feel like company, you know, give me a call, okay?

MATT
Okay.

She comes up on her toes, planting a kiss on his cheek.

DONNA
I'd like that, I'd really like that, Matt...
(as he leaves)
Hey Matt, you're really handsome, you know that... I'd like to see you again.

EXT. GREENWICH VILLAGE STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Sucdder laughs aloud as he steps out into a pleasant, tree-shaded cul-de-sac with little shops and casually-dressed strollers. The heat is melting the sidewalk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SCUDDER VOICE
It was funny the way she'd automatically slipped into her whore's manner, how warm and earnest. No wonder those stockbrokers climbed three flights to see her. She was an actress, and not a bad one either...

He comes abreast of a small men's clothing store, looks in the elegant window.

SCUDDER VOICE
I spotted a shirt and jacket I liked and suddenly I felt like I looked old and worn out and needed a new look. It was the heat talking.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. MEN'S STORE - DAY

Matt comes out of the store, dressed now in a black Hawaiian tropical shirt with white pelicans across the front, boots, new pants, looking cooler in the heat. A Woman passes, smiles at him. He looks at her, wonders why. Then another person passes, a middle-aged Man, and he smiles openly at Matt, who also looks at him wondering. The Man looks back again, suggestive. Matt walks on.

SCUDDER VOICE
It's funny the way people like you all of a sudden when you got new clothes on...

INT. JENNIFER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Matt in the apartment, several dogs and birds, talking to a luscious blonde, Jennifer. Chance seems to have a penchant for blondes.

SCUDDER VOICE
Next I saw Jennifer and Christine... both of them beautiful dead-ends. Then I went by Ellen's...

INT. CHRISTINE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Christine opening the door, a dark, sexy brunette, letting Matt in.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. ELLEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Matt stepping out of an apartment as Ellen, an older, attractive redheaded hooker, smiles and says goodbye.

SCUDDER VOICE
... who'd introduced Sunny to me, but she couldn't help me either, it was getting to be a dead-end all over and my feet hurt. I still had a few more to go, but I was tired of whores...

INT. QUEENS SUBWAY - ELEVATED PLATFORM - TWILIGHT

Matt rides the subway emerging from the tunnel under the river onto an elevated railbed, overlooking Queens at dusk. A wine light over the East River. Tugs.

SCUDDER VOICE
... so I took myself out to Queens to see the doorman who'd been on duty the night she bought it and whose face I couldn't remember 'cept for the three-day beard. Queens had changed a lot since I was a kid. It was like another country now...

EXT. STREETS - WOODSIDE, QUEENS - NIGHT

Bodegas in the shadow of the El. Posters in the windows of travel agencies offering flights to Bogota and Caracas. Spanish signs everywhere, clubs, restaurants, well-dressed chiquitas strolling in pairs down the sidewalks. Most of the population seems to be out on the stoops, RADIOS out, dancing to the BEAT, interacting with the street and the noise.

Scudder walks up to a two-story frame house with a front porch, five or six plastic lawn chairs, looks at his map.

INT. ROOMING HOUSE - NIGHT

A very short, very stout, middle-aged Spanish LANDLADY answers the door.

MATT
Teofilio Losada, <u>por favor</u>?

LANDLADY
<u>No esta aqui</u>.

MATT
<u>Es enfermo</u>?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LANDLADY
No se... no esta aqui.

MATT
(broken Spanish)
Well, does he have a job someplace?

LANDLADY
No esta aqui... Momento.

SCUDDER VOICE
She kept saying 'no esta aqui' like the world was flat instead of round... I knew something was up.

Matt flashing some bogus identification. A tall, hollow-cheeked MAN with a severely-trimmed mustache comes out in undershorts, looking suspiciously.

LANDLADY
(Spanish)
... but he's not in the room, what do you want?...

MATT
(Spanish)
No me importa... show me the room. Now.

INT. CORRIDOR AND LOSADA ROOM

Matt forcing his way into the corridor.

SCUDDER VOICE
She was right. He was 'no esta aqui' alright.

The landlady opening a door without knocking, standing aside and gesturing Matt to enter. The room is bare, strips of linoleum on the floor, chest of drawers, writing table.

LANDLADY
Entiende usted ahora? No esta aqui.

INT. CORRIDOR

The mustached husband has slipped off down the corridor and is making a call on the pay phone. Eyes on Matt and his wife down the hall.

INT. LOSADA ROOM

Matt goes to the closet, opens it. A couple of wire hangers stare back at him. He goes to the drawers. Empty. He looks around. Under this:

SCUDDER VOICE
I managed to find out he'd vanished sometime yesterday. He'd paid by the week like all her tenants so she assumed he was giving up the room. I still couldn't remember what he looked like. Except for an unshaven face...

FLASHBACK - INT. SUNNY'S APARTMENT BUILDING LOBBY - NIGHT

Sunny and Matt are parting that first night. The Doorman is there, a few feet away, reading "El Diario".

EXT. ROOMING HOUSE - NIGHT

Matt comes out on the stoop with the landlady and Mustache, gesturing and trying to make himself understood in pidgen Spanish. The landlady seems to be loosening up a bit now, talking animatedly at him.

SCUDDER VOICE
I don't know where, but somewhere along the line she decided she could speak English. I asked her if he'd been a good client? Did he use drugs? She was shocked by the suggestion. She ran a tight ship...

LANDLADY
(English)
No. No Dominican. No Puerto Rican. I rent only Columbians, Panamians, Ecuadorians. I no have problems. Sometimes they go fast because of the Immigration. Maybe that's why Losada he go? But that's not my business. I rent the rooms, is all...

MUSTACHE MAN
(English)
Maybe he is homesick. Maybe he fly back to Cartaghena?

MATT
Is that where he's from, Cartaghena?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LANDLADY
He is Columbian. I think he say Cartaghena.

Matt leaving them on the stoop.

EXT. ELEVATED PLATFORM - NIGHT

Matt walks up the stairs toward the subway. The ROAR of a departing TRAIN empties the station. Matt waiting.

A big billboard for a vodka advertisement stares at him, a hand suddenly on his shoulder, propelling him into the vodka billboard. He hits it hard, turns sharp. TWO COLUMBIAN MEN are waiting for his move. Neither of them more than 25, or taller than 5'9", but a raw-boned danger about them, a smiling, cocky indifference to pain or death, their eyes a roadmap of cruelties. They obviously have worked together before, one of them with an ugly knife, moving on Matt.

COLUMBIAN MUGGER #1
Motherfucker, what do you do here, why you come here, you motherfucker, you gonna die... gimme your money, go on.

COLUMBIAN MUGGER #2
... Give it to him, faggot. Now.

Matt thinking fast. The only way out. Playing it scared. Real scared -- trembling, his hands reaching for his wallet.

MATT
Sure -- you got it. You got everything you want...

Reaching in his pocket for his roll of cash, handing it over. Kid #1 grabs it.

COLUMBIAN MUGGER #1
Wallet, motherfucker! Who you looking for?

Matt reaching for his wallet, extending it, hand shaking. He drops it.

MATT
I'm sorry... Very sorry. I'll get it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He bends to retrieve it, shaking. The kid steps forward. Matt gathering his feet under him, bent at the knees. He moves -- straightening up hard and fast, slapping the knife away from his body, drawing his head full force into the kid's chin. The kid grunts in pain.

Matt swinging on the second Columbian, his leg coming up in a place-kicking motion, driving the head of his shoe into the guy's balls.

A brutal beating follows, Matt exacting a degree of revenge on these two muggers. As if to kill them. He rams Mugger #1's face into the vodka billboard. He throws Mugger #2 onto the subway track. Mugger #1 scoots off down the stairs and Mugger #2 runs off down the tracks and disappears. Matt is left standing there, getting his breath back, examining himself for any knife punctures, his adrenalin and heart pumping. We see he is shaken.

EXT. QUEENS - CAFECITO - NIGHT

Red neon winks at Matt from across the street. "Bar", it says. But he goes into the cafecito, framed by the elevated train station.

SCUDDER VOICE
... I had a hunch they'd followed me from the 'no esta aqui' lady. It was no ordinary mugging, it was a warning. Which meant the doorman knew something. I located Durkin at the bar where we'd had a few. I wanted another one now so bad I could taste the telephone wires...

INT. QUEENS CAFECITO - NIGHT

A noisy pastry and coffee place, Matt on the phone, wiping the blood from his nose with a handkerchief. In b.g., younger Hispanics of both sexes hang out. He never takes his eyes off them, not knowing where it's going to come from next in this neighborhood.

DURKIN (V.O.)
I don't know. Maybe he didn't like it here. Maybe the exterminator came and knocked off all his pet cockroaches. Maybe he owed rent and was skipping...

MATT
Joe. He was paid up through Friday.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT (CONT'D)
And he had a green card to work as a doorman, so it wasn't Immigration, either.

INT. COP BAR - NIGHT

Durkin's had a few. A ballgame on in the b.g. INTERCUT phone conversation as needed.

DURKIN
Maybe he went home. It's a new world these days, y'know. My grandparents came over here, they never saw Ireland again except for the annual calendar from Treaty Stone Wines and Liquors. These fuckin' people are on a plane to the islands once a month, and they come back carrying two chickens and another fuckin' relative. 'Course my grandparents worked, they didn't have welfare giving 'em a trip around the world.

MATT
He worked, Joe...

DURKIN
Good for him.

MATT
No, somebody spooked him and he ran. I don't think he left the city, either. I think he's moved a subway stop away, got a new name and checked into another room...

DURKIN
All right, all right, all this for a hooker... I'll put out an APB on this guy.

MATT
Thanks. I'd like you to check the morgues and the airlines while you're at it.

DURKIN
(laughs)
... If he's dead or out of the country he's not gonna be a whole lot of good to us, is he?
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DURKIN (CONT'D)
Listen, about the other day -- I got a little hot there, I didn't mean it.

MATT
Forget it, it could happen to a bishop.

DURKIN
Probably does. Just blowing off steam y'know...

MATT
(ironic)
Sure... Okay --

DURKIN
(laughs)
'Could happen to a bishop.' Talk to you tomorrow.

They hang up.

INT. TAXI - STREETS - NIGHT (TRAVELING)

Matt in the back seat. A juju TAPE from Prince Nico PLAYS, the DRIVER'S gay Haitian.

SCUDDER VOICE
I headed back across the bridge into Manhattan to keep an appointment with another hooker named Sarah Armstrong. Lady Sarah, Donna called her. She agreed to meet me at a piano club under the 59th Street bridge.

A crazed lunatic is out in the middle of the street, drunk, defiant, in ragged clothes. He's a young man with a filthy face shouting obscenities at the incoming traffic and grabbing his crotch and waving it in an exaggerated manner.

The Haitian cabdriver swerves, barely missing him.

CABDRIVER
Quelle fou! Il n'aime pas la vie!

SCUDDER VOICE
... When I see these guys I wonder how they get so crazy. I see myself ending up that way -- no woman, my kid won't talk to me, drinking sterno, and some guy like me'll drive by and think Jesus what happened to him?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He gets out of the cab. He crosses the sidewalk to an intimately-lit canopy with "Cherchez La Femme" written in scripted neon across the top.

INT. CHERCHEZ LA FEMME - NIGHT

The bar's low-lit and lined with good-looking Hookers, the ones without guys turning to check Scudder out. He moves past them, making eye contact.

There's a downed-out white guy with premature gray hair playing the piano nicely, Sinatra medleys, romantic, two black guys accompanying him.

More hookers are along the walls, in booths with the bigger turkeys. Businessmen mostly, Arabic-looking types and one table of Japanese who're spending big on buckets of champagne.

Matt murmurs something to a cocktail Waitress, who points.

Sarah Armstrong waits for him, alone in her booth, smoking, a sullen look at him. She's the one who was with Chance that first night at the J Club. The androgynous, anything-goes look, the long straight nose -- an educated face, upper Eastern class, Boston maybe with a scent of danger in it. Definitely the prettiest girl in the bar.

MATT
Hi.

SARAH
Sit down.

He sits.

MATT
I think we met before.

SARAH
The 'J'. I remember... Chance said cooperate. Drink?

She seems a little drunk, Matt looking up at the Waitress who's come over.

MATT
Just some bubble water, with ice.

SARAH
Another Stoli. Straight and cold -- the way God made it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Matt eyeing her empty glass, the two of them looking at each other, sizing the other one up.

SARAH
Chance says you were a cop. You got into some kind of trouble. You took some drug money or something?

He looks at her hard. She's looking for a level ground between them, some strain of corruption she might relate to.

MATT
If I did, would I tell you, and if I didn't, would you the fuck believe me?

Pause.

SARAH
(grins)
Leave it at that then... So you want to know about the Dairy Queen? You know I wasn't surprised when she died.

MATT
Why's that.

SARAH
I don't know, she was born to disaster. Once the corn-fed innocence was gone, I don't think she could've handled it. I knew it was going to be dramatic -- suicide, pills, heroin, something. I didn't expect murder, but I knew she wouldn't come out the other end of the tunnel.

The Waitress brings the drinks. The vodka straight, cold, alluring.

MATT
I read somewhere -- some Russian writer -- the best vodka's like a razor -- pure and lethal, no sloppy edges. But you got to be a surgeon to drink it or the patient'll die on the operating table.

SARAH
Sounds like you've been there... To Sunny Hendryx.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They drink, his eyes going to the very impressive emerald ring on her fourth finger. The same quality as what Sunny wore.

SARAH
... The morning she was killed I read it in the paper, you know what I did? I called a travel agent and a couple of hours later I was on a plane to Barbados. A week on the beach -- sailing, sunbathing, steel drums, rum drinks on the terrace at sunset...

MATT
Did you think Chance did it?

SARAH
Maybe at first, but then no. Out of character. My second night there I met this guy in the hotel. Tax lawyer. Rich, polite, divorced. And we had a nice little romance for the week. Long walks on the beach, dinner, dancing, you know, all that. And good sex too. I thought I'd really have to work at it, you know -- being interested in bed, but you know what, I didn't have to. I was shy. Why am I telling you this?

Matt drinks, shrugs and smiles.

MATT
I don't know, but it's interesting.

SARAH
Well, naturally he wanted to see me in the city. He lives here. He thinks I'm in the interior decoration business. Freelance, of course. I thought about it, but then I gave him a phony number. It could've worked, I mean I could've lied my way into being his wife, I could be the wife to a lot of guys, I'd be a good wife. I could give up my apartment and drop my john book in the incinerator. But for what?... For what? I guess there's just no one guy I really give a shit about.

She finishes her vodka, motions for another.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A hit of cocaine vanishes up her nose in one long swoop of a red fingernail. It takes Matt another second to register it. The white-haired Piano Player seques into another song. A party of rich Arabs comes in, the Hookers putting the move on them like birds circling land.

SCUDDER VOICE
It's funny the way people tell you more about themselves when they don't know you at all than when they know you just a little. I asked her how she got into the business...

SARAH
Hooking? I was a writer. Don't laugh. I was a couple of years out of Boston University, writing these feminist pieces for a Soho rag, right, so I decided I'd do a story on this pimp Chance who I met in this reggae bar, right -- good looking man, very sexy, smooth, got all the moves Chance. I ended up in bed with him after the interview and in bed he's telling me exactly what to do and how to do it. It was great, I didn't know anything really about sex. Most guys are shy that way, you know, they don't tell you what they really want, they think you can read their minds...

The Waitress brings the second round. The Arabs and the Hookers are now divvying up a banquette.

SARAH
... anyway he was saying I should write a real insider's view of prostitution. Why not go all the way with it? Be a hooker for a couple months? Why not? Suddenly I could see the best book ever written on the subject...
(pauses)
You know that's really bullshit. He said to me, 'Sarah,' he said...
(mimics his lilt)
... 'you're beautiful, baby, and you're great in bed, you can make a lot of money being a hooker with me, why don't you just go for it!'

Pausing to reflect on her initial enthusiasm, she's amused by it now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SARAH
So I did. I told myself it's not forever, just for a little while. I even kept a diary. Then one day two months later it dawned on me. I actually was a whore. I almost killed myself... I worked it out. I tell myself I'm not a hooker -- I'm just 'into hooking' -- a couple more years I'll quit. Problem is it's an easy life -- plenty of time to read, write, go to museums, concerts, Barbados. I save my money. I own a condo on East 57th, I rent it out, I have a little summer house in East Hampton, a piece of an apartment building in Queens an accountant john of mine got me into. I send my parents a check every month. They think I'm an interior designer too. Couple more years I'll be worth more than a couple million dollars. On paper anyway... So it's hard to say no, but when the time's right, I'll walk away... I know myself.

She finishes off the vodka, obviously needing another one or, by the nose gestures, another hit of cocaine. She's obviously wired, but subtle about it, not obvious.

SARAH
How 'bout moving?

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

They leave the club, past a man walking his poodle.

SCUDDER VOICE
I walked her home. She was smart, sexy. I knew she was no good, but I was drawn to her...

SARAH
... There were Spanish guys, sure. A party of Venezuelans, Columbians'd fly in for the weekend, rent a floor at the Regency, call up Chance. He'd send a bunch of us over. Wild parties -- lots of toot, champagne, caviar, Arabs, Japanese, I mean it's just not Spanish guys. Why? She mention somebody Spanish to you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT
No. Nobody special.

She looks off, too disinterested. She's lying, something about her tone of voice. They pass a wretched hulk of a Bag Lady wandering stark-eyed, talking to herself.

SARAH
You had something going with her, didn't you?

MATT
Why do you say that?

SARAH
You act like you let her down, like you owe her something.

They stop in front of her building. Along the East River.

MATT
She took me to bed after I did the job for her, if that's what you mean. ... It was like a tip y'know. A friendly way of saying thank you.

SARAH
Did you enjoy it? Was she good?

MATT
I still wonder why she did it. If she was involved with somebody, I mean? Would she just go to bed with me for the hell of it?

SARAH
You're forgetting something.

MATT
What?

SARAH
She was a hooker.

MATT
Oh... Were you a hooker in Barbados?

SARAH
Maybe I was and maybe I wasn't. But I can tell you this much.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SARAH (CONT')
I was damn glad when the mating dance was over and we were in bed together because for a change I knew what I was doing. And going to bed with guys is what I do.

Pause. He looks at her. She looks back at him. He looks up at her towering East Side apartment, rising like the side of an ocean liner fifty stories into the night. He looks back at her.

MATT
I'll bet you have a nice view.

SARAH
You want to take a look?

She moves with a feline grace into her lobby.

EXT. SARAH'S TERRACE - NIGHT

They're on a terrace looking across the East River to Queens, with a view north along the Drive, where a thousand lights shine like candles from the apartment towers. She's fixed the terrace up with shrubbery, plants, trees. He has his wallet out and is showing her a picture of his girl.

MATT
... it's an old picture, but...

SARAH
She's a pretty girl.

MATT
Yeah, a good kid, too.

Something catches in his throat and he falls silent.

SARAH
So why'd you leave them?

MATT
Oh, that's a long story.

He shrugs, forget it. She finishes her vodka, swirls the ice in the empty glass.

SARAH
Bet it was this stuff...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT
What makes you say that?

SARAH
(shrugs)
Not drinking... way you watch me when I drink.

MATT
How?

SARAH
Like a tiger crouched around a waterhole. Only an alcoholic looks like that...

MATT
Chance told you some bullshit...

Sarah shrugs, pulls out her cocaine tooter, sniffs it.

SARAH
Look, I don't give a shit what your problem is... Want some?

She offers the coke.

MATT
No, thanks...

She snorts his line.

SARAH
You want to talk about it or what?

MATT
About what?

SARAH
(sarcastic)
About what? About drinking. It's on your mind, isn't it?

MATT
Look, don't patronize me, okay. I'm a heavy drinker, I was a heavy drinker, but I can stop anytime I want to.

SARAH
Sure you can.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT
I can.

SARAH
Well I can't.

MATT
I'm sorry for you.

SARAH
Thank you... Now why don't you get outta here, you superior sonufabitch --

She stands, tosses the ice cubes from her glass into the shrubs, pissed, the conversation obviously at an end.

Matt tries to calm her down.

MATT
Look I... I'm sorry...

SARAH
No you're not. You like people making fools of themselves in front of you. It makes you feel better. Go on, get out of here.

MATT
Sarah, look... it's no secret... it's just something I don't like to talk about. It's something that happened four years ago. In Queens. I was involved in this shooting...

Grudgingly, she listens, quieting herself. He paces to the edge of the terrace, irritated at first to have to tell it, but then, slowly, surely, goes back into the past.

MATT
... I was off-duty, okay. I was in this bar drinking with a partner one night, alright. It was a place where cops could drink on the arm. The owner liked having us around, so you could run a tab. I was pissed off about something went bad on a narcotics bust and the brass gave me a reprimand. My first one. I wanted to unwind before I drove back out to the Island... Well, two punks held up the place.

FLASHBACK - INT./EXT. QUEENS BAR AND STREETS - NIGHT

We go to black and white images, murky, speeded up in spots like an old film, alternating with slow motion, as if unsteadily perceived by his mind, the SOUNDTRACK building to a climactic ROAR like an oncoming el train...

Scudder in plainclothes is drinking with a guy. Two black GUYS come in, pistols drawn. They're screaming something, "Get on the floor! Now, you cocksuckers!" but it's soundless... One of the blacks with a Muslim-type beard vaulting the bar and cleaning out the cash register as the terrified Bartender looks on...

The other guy walks around the room, stepping on necks.

2ND ROBBER
Keep your heads down, mothers! Down! Down!

Scudder manages to look up, and sees the Muslim guy at the cash register turn and SHOOT the Bartender. TWICE. Then vaults the bar, runs out.

SCUDDER VOICE
They shot the bartender on the way out. Shot him dead just for the hell of it.

Matt jumping up, pulling his gun and racing after the two guys who are already out the bar, running like sprinters.

Matt gets to the door, FIRES.

One of them goes down, hit in the back.

The Muslim guy FIRES back wildly from behind a car, runs on down a street, with a few people in it, starting to scatter.

Matt, chasing, drops to his knees, military-style, takes aim. He has him dead in his sights. He squeezes the trigger.

But the guy suddenly drops down to his right, hitting the pavement. A little seven-year-old Spanish girl with pigtails is standing there in Matt's sights. The BULLET takes her right through her head, flinging her off the stoop on which she'd been playing. Her father screaming something.

The Muslim scoots behind a car and FIRES TWO more SHOTS off at Scudder, who doesn't move, doesn't try to dodge the bullets.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The guy tears off around a corner.

Matt, gun in hand, horrified, walks over to the father holding his dead child in his arms, screaming his grief out. The blood soaking the black hair. A crowd swiftly gathering.

SCUDDER VOICE
(numb)
... I got one of them. And then I got the little girl. I hit her right between the eyes. The guy dropped down just at that moment. One half second later and I would've saved her life. But I didn't. I killed her...

The SOUNDTRACK is THUMPING louder and louder over Matt's face as he sees clearly now what he's just done.

The crowd engulfs him in a primal fury, beating at him, tearing at his clothes... He does nothing.

END OF FLASHBACK.

EXT. SARAH'S TERRACE - NIGHT

She looks at him, moved in spite of herself.

SARAH
Oh God...

MATT
The crowd tore me apart. Then the Hispanic community got on the case. The press, the Mayor, everybody. The thing is they were right. I should never've taken on those two guys on a busy street with those drinks in me, but I had to be John Wayne, right, too many war movies, too many drinks. The Department exonerated me of all guilt, but it was over. I mean, I didn't want to be a cop anymore, something went out of me. That's when I started drinking heavy. I got reckless on the job, I was looking to get into trouble, any reason to get out. to end it... It didn't take too long...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SARAH
I'm sorry...

MATT
(half a laugh)
Yeah, so am I... between the two of us we got the most depressing life stories I heard today... Some days I don't know whether to shit or go blind.

It makes her laugh. He shares it. They look at each other, he reaches out, touches her.

MATT
You know one thing I'd really like?

SARAH
What's that?

MATT
I'd like not to go home alone tonight.

He kisses her, gently, probingly, the big NOISY CITY the only SOUND on the terrace now. She's tough, but slowly she kisses him back. Draws back, looks at him, as if reluctant, not at ease about this. He kisses her again, starts to unbutton her. Her breasts come free. He kisses them.

INT. SARAH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

They're kissing on the couch in the dark of her apartment. She takes his pants down, fondles him.

They fuck intensely across the living room floor. She's bucking underneath him... Hands, feet, legs, arching buttocks. Sweat, eyes...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SARAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

They're in her bed, making love again, a quieter, less intense version of the living room. They subside to silence. The dawn light is cracking through the curtains.

She lights a cigarette, gives him one. He's looking at her lovingly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT
You are beautiful, aren't you? I think you're the most beautiful woman I've ever seen in my life.

His enthusiasm is boyish and infectious. She smiles.

SARAH
I know this sounds like bullshit coming from a girl like me, but... you're special, too, Scudder.

He leans over to kiss her one more time. They hug, his eyes over her shoulder. They now fall on Sunny's white angora CAT Nebraska, who ambles into the bedroom through the crack in the door, PURRING for its breakfast. She hears the MEOW, notices Matt's pinpointed eyes, looks in the same direction. He pulls back, casually, but suddenly his embrace is cold.

MATT
Beautiful cat... wasn't that Sunny's?

SARAH
(casually)
Yeah, that's 'Nebraska.' I was worried about her. All alone in the apartment, no food. So I went over the next day and picked her up.

MATT
(pause)
I thought the next day you caught the first plane to Barbados?

SARAH
Well, I went to the apartment first, then I got a plane in the afternoon.

MATT
Sarah, the apartment was closed off by the police.

The CAT jumps up on the bed, PURRING.

SARAH
(shrugs)
Well I paid off the doorman.

MATT
Oh? What time were you there?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SARAH
Oh it was about ten, ten-thirty.

Matt gets up, puts his pants and shirt on.

MATT
Funny thing is I was in the apartment at nine o'clock and there was no goddamn cat there.

SARAH
... well maybe he was in the closet someplace. Probably knowing Nebraska, he...

MATT
I checked the closets. I checked everywhere.

He's dressing, furious now.

MATT
What's the matter, Sarah, cat got your tongue? Unless Sunny gave it to you sometime in the middle of the night, it's pretty goddamn clear somebody took the cat out of there and gave it to you, somebody who killed her. Maybe you? Or maybe the guy who gave you that ring -- cunt!

She throws on her robe, getting up out of bed.

SARAH
That's a lie! I never would've hurt Sunny!

He's in her face now, furious, grabs her by the hair and shakes her.

MATT
You cunt! You know who killed her, don't you?

She rips away from him, marching to the telephone.

SARAH
Get out of here! I want my lawyer! You have no right to question me like this. You come here, you make love to me, you entrap me! Get out!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She picks up the phone, dials.

MATT
Go ahead, call your lawyer, you need one. You're an accessory to homicide.

She ceases dialing, hangs up, trying to reestablish an even tone.

SARAH
Look, Scudder... I can't take a bust like this. My parents, my clients, I mean it'll be a mess, I can't afford it.

Matt crosses past her, picks up the phone.

MATT
Well maybe you need a sea change, Sarah, maybe you'll get to write that book now. You fucked me over pretty good.

He dials. She grabs him, a desperate tone as he lowers the phone:

SARAH
You don't know what you're dealing with here, Matt! You don't want to know these people! They're animals -- you're no match for them, a broken-down cop with a drinking problem, they'd eat you alive, Matt. They're nuts! Please, Matt -- for my sake, your sake -- stay out of it! You don't have a chance!

The cat's rubbing up against his leg. He raises the phone, dials.

MATT
Neither do you.

SARAH
Oh God, you don't understand! Why are you doing this?

MATT
Maybe 'cause Sunny's dead and her killer's walking around, and I don't know why, but it bothers me.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT (CONT'D)
(into the phone)
... Yeah -- get me...

She rips the phone out of his hand, furious, taking him on, a wholly different, violent personality asserting itself.

SARAH
Sunny! What was Sunny to you? A ten-minute fuck? You want to know about Sunny? She was trash! Garbage! A low-class, lying, cheating whore. She was muling cocaine for these people, right -- flying in and out of Columbia, Panama, Miami. She started making more money than she ever dreamed of and then she made the mistake they all make when they get rich -- She thought she was smarter than everybody else. So she started holding out on the guy. You don't do that to a Columbian, you don't screw them in a business deal. 'Cause when he found out he killed her. Not only did he kill her, he made her suffer. I know because he told me...

She remembers it, vivid. She turns away from him as Matt hangs up the phone.

SARAH
I don't know where you wandered in, but she was tooling you around with that story about getting out and going legitimate. Shit! Sunny straight?! That's like a tiger without stripes. She was playing high stakes, Scudder. Chance on one side and this guy on the other, and she was scared to shit like she should've been, so she bought you for insurance. These guys you'd need a major casualty. You got it now, Scudder? Sunny Hendryx wasn't what she said she was. She was a lying, cheating thief.

Matt pauses, deliberating. Then he reaches for the phone, dials. She sighs, defeated totally.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SARAH
You don't get it... alright, alright. His name's Angel... Angel Maldonado... He's got other names. Diablo, Sixto, Ramon. He's got more names than I got johns. I met him through Sunny. We used to trick together -- some sandwich. You could imagine the cash we pulled.

Parting with the information has deflated her totally and she throws herself down on a chair, shaking her head at herself, fearing the consequences of it all, and feeling doomed. Doomed and emotionally spent.

MATT
Where is he?

SARAH
Don't worry about that, he'll be around...

She buries her head in her hands, sighing. Matt rises, takes his leave.

MATT
Tell him you got a john name of Jerry Silverstein -- a bookie -- who's looking to buy steady and big. A guy with Wall Street customers. Set up a meeting.

She registers fear as the ramifications run through her head. He goes right up to her, grabs her by the back of the head, kisses her, pulls back.

MATT
Don't worry, Sarah, you can do it, you're a good actress -- you almost had me sold.

A note of regret in his voice as he quits the apartment, pausing to bend down and give the pussy one last stroke.

MATT
... Yes... good littly pussy...

EXT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN - NIGHT

A crowd, mostly black and Hispanic, is moving into the Garden off Seventh Avenue.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

New York's bustling tonight and they're dressed to the max. Matt moves through it, stopping to look at another watch offered by a JUNKIE peddler, about fourteen years old, desperate.

JUNKIE
Ten bucks, mister, check it out. Brand new.

It catches his eye. A beautiful gold Rolex.

JUNKIE
I gotta cop, man, and I need forty. I got thirty. It's yours, man. Ten bucks.

MATT
Ten bucks?...

He reaches in his pocket.

SCUDDER VOICE
She set up the meeting a couple nights later. At the Garden. He had a fighter there...

INT. GARDEN - BOXING MATCHES

The preliminary fight is over. The verdict is announced. Boos, yells from various corners. Matt's upon the aisle behind the box seats, looking around the place for Sarah and her party.

SCUDDER VOICE
Meantime, Durkin called back to tell me the doorman, Teofilio Losado, was 'vamos' -- back to Cartaghena. Ticketed through a travel agency which was owned by a guy named Diablo Gutierrez, who I figured was Angel Maldonado...

He looks at his new watch impatiently. He looks again. It's broken. He tries to wind it.

MATT
That sonufabitch!

Looking around to see if the peddler's still around, his eyes fall on ANGEL MALDONADO leading his troupe to their front row seats.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sarah, looking beautiful, is on his arm. Then three expensively-dressed Columbian guys with three Chiquitas.

Matt moves in their direction, eyes studying Maldanado from afar. The man has a face you remember, burning black eyes, pirate handsome with a short, silken ponytail tied in a bun, a two-day growth of whiskers, mustache, gleaming white teeth. A tough, lean face, elegantly chiselled, with a green emerald earring in his left ear, well-tailored. He moves like a leopard, ahead of everybody else.

The new Fighters are in the ring, the Referee giving them final instructions. This is obviously the fight Maldonado came for as he gets to his box, applauds the Spanish kid. The other guy's black. Skinny welterweights.

Matt moves toward them.

SCUDDER VOICE
... The only other witnesses were the cat and Sarah. The cat couldn't talk, and if I brought Sarah into it, she'd probably end up like Sunny. No, the way to get this guy was on a red herring. If I could set him up on some kind of narcotics rap, then maybe some other cockroaches with a grudge against him would crawl out of the woodwork and one thing leads to another in this town. You never know, but this guy looked like he'd killed a few other people along the way...

The first-round BELL RINGS. The fighters come out, circling, careful not to risk serious injury. A few boos.

Sarah watches him approach, a nervously-relaxed mask on her face. The Columbians, except for Angel, watch, somewhat astonished, as the big Gringo walks into their box. DIEGO, the second, jumps up, blocking Matt's progress. A second Man, a bodyguard-type, takes up a position on Matt's other shoulder, fast, smooth.

SCUDDER VOICE
... So I became Jerry Silverstein again. I'd played him years ago as an undercover cop.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SCUDDER VOICE (CONT'D)
A lightweight bookie with big dreams -- The perfect victim for the larger predators of the species, like Angel. In fact, I'd played losers so long I was starting to think it wasn't an act anymore...

DIEGO
You want something, mister?

His tone polite. Matt's eyes flicking to Sarah, who nudges Angel and mutters. Angel's eyes flick out at him, cold, satanic eyes, like black stones. Back to the fight without expression.

MATT
Yeah, Jerry Silverstein. I got a date with Angel Maldonado.
(to Sarah)
Hello baby! You look great tonight.

Angel pretends not to hear it, but does. Matt's tone that of a brash Jewish businessman. Diego looks him up and down slowly, with contempt, goes over to Angel and says something. The guy responds in a torrent of Spanish. Diego comes back to Matt, who is being yelled at by Fans sitting behind -- "Sit Down!"

DIEGO
He wants to watch the fight. He talk to you after the fight. Go back to your seat.

MATT
Hey man, it's a ten-rounder, I don't have that much time to blow, y'know, I...

DIEGO
It won't go ten. Go back to your seat.

Matt pauses, leaves.

INT. GARDEN (LATER)

The Spanish kid decks the black kid. He's obviously out cold as Matt rises from his seat, heading for the exit. Extensive booing now from the entire Garden.

Angel Maldonado applauding.

EXT. GARDEN - NIGHT

Angel's waiting for his car at the curb, flanked by his people. Matt walks over to them, Diego blocking him again.

MATT
Hi, it's me again, remember me? So when do I get to see the chief Rabbi?
(to Sarah)
Hey Sarah, honey, introduce me, willya?

SARAH
Oh hi, Jerry, I didn't see you. Uh... say hello to Angel Maldonado.

MATT
How ya doing, Angel? Jerry Silverstein...

Sticks out his hand. Angel looks at it, doesn't shake it, not that interested.

ANGEL
Yeah, you the guy wants to talk, right? Get in the car.

An $84,000 Silver Cloud Rolls-Royce has just rolled up to the curb. Room for everybody. Matt steps inside, his eyes crossing with Sarah's.

INT. ROLLS-ROYCE - STREETS - NIGHT (TRAVELING)

Angel steps in, taking the center seat, pointing to one of the fold-out fur-covered seats directly across from him, eyes flicking over Matt. Matt sits in it.

Silence. They drive. Matt up close picks out Angel's silk shirt, yellow polka dot tie, rings on four fingers, an ID bracelet with his name in emeralds. and a Corum 18-karat gold ingot watch. He's got a cigarette habit, nervous, physical, touching the people he talks to, then alternately cold and cut off. His English is mauled and badly broken and he both talks and listens like a man who's stone deaf in one ear.

ANGEL
(to Driver; in Spanish)
Hey Bupi. Call the Club. Clear out a table.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUPI
Right, boss.

ANGEL
Sarah here says you want to get into the drug business, Silverstein. That right?

MATT
That's right, Angel.

ANGEL
You don't look Jewish?

MATT
(shrugs)
My mother was an anti-Semite.

Angel doesn't get it, but grins anyway.

ANGEL
... So you got customers lined up on Wall Street, rich Jews like you, right?

MATT
That's right, Angel.

ANGEL
No, that's wrong, chico. I know you. I see you before...

The shift is sudden, the car tensing, the bodyguards going for their weapons.

MATT
Hey, come on, Angel.

ANGEL
I know your face. You're a cop, asshole. You in a stupid place to be a cop. Check him out.

They move on him, 9 mm Lugers out and pointed at his head. He's yanked and searched for wires. Sarah a stiff look.

SARAH
He's not a cop, Angel. He's just a...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANGEL
Shut up! You got a radio mike, man, is the last thing you gonna hear is your confession. You know what I do with narcs, gringo? I kill narcs right. First I bribe 'em then I kill 'em. Narc bugs. I squash 'em with my fingernails.

Blindingly fast, he flicks his hand out and collars Matt by the shirtcollar and pulls him in, eyeballs him. Matt stares back at him, hard.

DIEGO
(searching Matt)
... Nada.

MATT
I'm no cop, Angel. Get your fucking hands off me!

ANGEL
'Scuse me?

MATT
You heard me.

Angel shoves him again. Matt makes his move. The back of his hand flicking into Angel's face with a light slap. Bap! Not for power, more for speed, showing the guy. Angel drops back, surprised. What! His hands still gripping Matt.

Guns are jammed into Matt's ribs. Diego one side, Primo the other.

MATT
Hey! Hey! Guys, let's not splatter Angel's Silver Cloud up, all right. We don't want trouble now, do we, Angel?

Angel breaks open his most charming smile, eyes glistening, drops his hands.

ANGEL
Hey I like you, Jerry the Jew, you crazy...

The guns slowly being withdrawn. Sarah rolls her eyes, releasing tension. The mood swings back the other way.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANGEL
Hey Bupi, you seen anything following us? Like a tank or something?

BUPI, the driver, checking the rear mirror, shaking his head.

BUPI
Nothing but the wind, boss.

Angel suddenly clicks his fingers as he remembers, points in Matt's face.

ANGEL
With Sunny! You was with Sunny, that's where I seen you. You was fucking her.

DIEGO
(remembering)
Yeah. You was coming out the lobby, Losada said you'd just been up there.

ANGEL
(to Diego)
Shut up.

MATT
(callous)
Yeah, sure, Sunny Hendryx. The hooker. Can you blame me? Six feet of pussy like that? Too bad what happened, hunh?

ANGEL
Yeah, one stupid chiquita. She put you into Sarah?

Eyes working.

MATT
(on Sarah)
Yeah. The two of them. Some sandwich hunh. Fucked the daylights outta me. Really twisted my stick.

ANGEL
(colder)
Yeah, you must got a lot of money invested in that pussy of hers. 'Cause <u>you</u> gotta pay for it...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He laughs as he tweaks her twat.

ANGEL
... and I own the lock.

They're all chuckling as she removes his hand, trying to be above it all.

MATT
Hey, it's okay with me, she's worth every dollar. You got a classy looking lady there, Angel.

SARAH
Thank you, Jerry.

Looking poisonously at Angel.

ANGEL
(to Sarah)
Yeah, classy and does what I tell her to do, and one thing I tell her to do is don't fuck Jerry the Jew no more.
(to Matt)
You got that, gringo? We do business, you fuck her, you're dead.

MATT
I got it, Angel.

Sarah and Matt sharing a brief look.

EXT. LA CARTAGHENA CLUB - NIGHT

They pull up in front of the club, in the upper Broadway area, the streets busy with action, kids waiting in line to get in.

Maldonado heads into the crowd with his flying wedge. Many of them know him, call out: "Hey, Angel, get me in, willya, it's Francisco Morales." Angel rapping briefly with his guys at the door, goes in.

INT. LA CARTAGHENA CLUB

A classy Columbian spot. Combinations of country western and hip-shaking cumbia. The crowd young, gay, attractive, with money to spend.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Angel, crossing to his reserved black booth above the dance floor. His people are strong-arming the occupants out, many in the crowd paying their respects to Angel, Matt now part of the entourage. They take their seats in the booth, white bulbs of neon lining the tables and banquets like a movie marquee. Everybody's a star at the Cartaghena, including the Waitresses with their little coco-chanel hats and hose and high heels, but the biggest star of all is Angel Maldonado. Over this:

SCUDDER VOICE
Right out the gate I made him for a loony tune. A real dangerous one and smart. It was the shifts in mood that kept me off balance with him, like a good fighter. When he looked me in the eye, I'd swear I felt there was a gun pointed at my spine...

INT. LA CARTAGHENA CLUB (LATER)

They're partying in the booth, people stopping by to shake hands with Angel, who's on a velour-lined phone, yelling something in Spanish. Angel's young Hispanic Fighter, all bruised up, has joined them, a victory celebration, champagne. Matt's on Angel's other side, drinking Coca-Colas and talking with him.

SCUDDER VOICE
... As it turned out he owned the place. He was checking me out, but I had Jerry Silverstein down -- no base, moving around the country, Miami, Vegas, Saratoga, L.A. -- the betting pockets he, as a new spic on the block, didn't know. I told him I had a list of Wall Street guys into football, baseball, any kind of ball. Crazies, guys who'd move a few million on a weekend. 'Course a lot of 'em were heavy users of cocaine...

ANGEL
So how much money you make being a bookie?

MATT
I can pull down forty, fifty grand on a good weekend. After expenses.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT (CONT'D)
Problem is I hit a bust-out weekend, I get wiped out. That's why I like your business -- you never lose.

Angel grins, puts his hand on his fighter's shoulder, affectionate.

ANGEL
What'd you think of my boy tonight, hunh? He don't know what losing is. Another Wilfredo Benitez.

Matt glances at the boy drinking with Sarah. He seems drunk. His eyes following the progress of the drink back to the table. He looks away.

MATT
Depends on your point of view. If the fight hadn't been fixed, he might've lost.

ANGEL
(stung)
Hey, man, why you say that?

MATT
The other guy was a good fighter. Smart, he had a big opening in the third and he didn't follow up. But he was trying to get through the sixth and he couldn't. The knockout looked real.

ANGEL
(with new respect)
You got an eye. Guy was set to go in the eighth.

MATT
Your kid know it was set up?

ANGEL
What do you think? He gets his cojones beating up the spook. Next time out he's better.

MATT
Maybe.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANGEL
You box, Jerry, you look like you can handle yourself.

MATT
Hey, I'm Jewish. Two fights at the 'Y' was enough.

ANGEL
Me I was terrific. Middleweight. Could've been something... Got hit here. In the eye. Can't see too good. Next shot goes to the brain. Adios Angel Maldonado, right.

Play punches with Matt, lightning fast fists stopping short of his eyeball by inches. Matt grins, tense. Angel grins.

ANGEL
You drink that diet cola shit all the time.

MATT
I'm like you, Angel. One more drink and my liver falls out. Adios, Jerry Silverstein.

ANGEL
(laughs)
Yeah, you ought to buy a new liver. I tell you what, there's a lot of starving sons of bitches out there sell you one you pay 'em enough. So whatta you say to some really good toot, hunh?

MATT
I say sure...

Angel indicates they go upstairs. Stands, muttering something to Cesar, his 250-pound, low-to-the-ground, bowling ball bodyguard.

INT. CORRIDOR AND OFFICE

Angel leads Matt down a carpeted hallway, the SOUNDS of the MUSIC pounding from downstairs.

ANGEL
... 'course I don't do much of this shit myself, but once in a while, you know...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He unlocks the door to his office with his private key. The office is replete with the newest electronic gadgetry, the newest phones, stereo and television screens -- and an enchanting, two-tiered electric train system built by Lionel, the tracks interweaving on a splendidly-landscaped board. Angel lights it up. The train choo-chooing around the bend as he breaks out a large vial of coke, lays it out on the train board.

Matt's looking at the train.

ANGEL
... Hunh? You like my train?

MATT
You toot along with it, hunh?

Angel snorts, passes the silver snooter to Matt.

ANGEL
Peruvian flake. They call it 'E.T.' You snort it, your neck grows ten inches. You like -- no burn right?

Matt snorts. A moment. Feels good. The train going "toot-toot" through a tunnel.

MATT
Good. But it's not rainbow.

ANGEL
(little stung)
Yeah. You like rainbow rock, hunh?

MATT
My customers are Blue Chip, Angel, baby. Gotta keep 'em dancing in clover or I lose them.

ANGEL
Yeah, how much you interested in?

MATT
I tell you what, we'll open the ballgame at ten kilos.

ANGEL
Ten, hunh. How much you gonna pay?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A thin Hispanic guy with dark glasses comes into the room, hangs out. Angel pays him no attention, picking up an electronic rifle with gizmo attached, playing with it, clicking and unclicking its firing mechanisms. It makes a funny sound.

MATT
What kind of proof?

ANGEL
Ninety, ninety-one. This stuff's so good it can take an eighteen and ten cut. You walk away with triple your money. Y'ever see one of these things? Electronic rifle. Got it from a mail order catalog. Crazy shit, hunh?

MATT
Let me taste it. Bring me a key and let me see how my buyers like the product. If it's what you say it is, then I think we can do business.

ANGEL
No. No. That's not the way I work, chico. I don't show no key. You show me $100,000, you get a taste, then when it goes down, you get the whole ten keys. You show me $300,000, chico. Cash. No credit cards... Next time 'round, I give you a better deal.

Grinning, he moves the rifle around until it's pointing right at Scudder.

ANGEL
Cop can always come up with money for a key. Guy gets burned that way. You're not a cop, are you, Jerry Silverschmuck? 'Cause if you are...

He slowly releases the safety device and pulls the trigger. A soft, terrifying HISS OF escaped GAS pops loudly, co-mingled with Angel Maldonado's giggle. Matt stands there, frozen to the carpet, not having to feign a moment of fear.

ANGEL
You know how many undercovers I killed in Columbia? Two. Here? One. Nobody knows that 'cept you, Jerry... okay?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT
(quietly)
Okay, Angel... we'll do it your way. And if it is what you say it is...

MAN
Oh, excuse me.

They turn, eyes falling on this white, STOCKBROKER-type in a suit and glasses who's poking his head in the door.

STOCKBROKER (MAN)
I was looking for the men's room.

ANGEL
You what!... How'd he get in here!

To the guy with the dark glasses as they both converge on the startled stockbroker. Angel gets to him first, collars him and slams him up against the wall.

ANGEL
Who the fuck are you! How'd you get in here. Talk, you cocksucker!

STOCKBROKER
I... I... I'm lost. I was looking for the bathroom, I'm...

ANGEL
What's this look like -- a shithouse!

He slaps the guy a few times, hard, the wrist very fast, breaking the guy's glasses, his nose bleeding.

ANGEL
Get him out of here 'fore I kill him! You're lucky, mister blue suit. Nobody looks in my office without my permission. Don't you ever go walking 'round on floors lookin' for toilets again 'cause next time you might not find a nice guy like me let you walk away. Get him outta my face!

The sunglassed Hispanic whisks him out. The guy never looked like he knew what was happening to him. Matt looking on impassively.

ANGEL
So where were we?
(grins)
That's not one of your Wall Street guys now, is it, Jerry?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT
... if it's rainbow rock, I'll go thirty a key with you. Three hundred thousand.

ANGEL
(snorts)
Rainbow yeah. I'll get you rainbow, but it's thirty-two, Jerry, forget thirty or thirty-one, this stuff's so good you gonna need two handkerchiefs because your nose is guaranteed to bleed. It's gonna knock your jock off!

MATT
When do we meet?

ANGEL
When I call you. Give me a number.

SCUDDER VOICE
I gave him a number and a code to an answering service. I was careful not to get followed. The coke made me die inside for a drink. Any drink. Cow piss would've done it...

INT. CAB - STREETS - NIGHT (TRAVELING)

They stop at a red light, Matt looking back.

SCUDDER VOICE
I took a subway and ended up in a cab. This one was spotless. The driver was reading about the International Monetary Crisis at red lights.

MATT
... How's the book?

INDIAN DRIVER
Oh yes very good book. You know for many years I am confused. I go to many universities. I have many degrees. But now it is finally clear to me -- the solution to the world economic problem, yes?

MATT
Oh yeah, what's the solution?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

INDIAN DRIVER
The solution is that capitalism is inherently illogical and cannot work -- but it does, you see. And communism is inherently logical and can work -- but it doesn't, you see. When you drive a taxi in this city, you understand this simple truth. So you see, after many years I am a lucky man.

A genial, sunny laugh reigns through the cab, his alert squirrel eyes picking Matt out in the mirror.

SCUDDER VOICE
First guy I met today who seemed like he was sane... I called Chance, he called me right away. I told him I had to see him.

EXT. SOHO LOFT - NIGHT

A warehouse district, lonely, cobbled streets, lamps. Matt crossing into a building past a couple of giggling Rich Kid Druggies who lurch out of the building, talking in European accents. Matt looks up, crosses.

INT. CHANCE'S LOFT - NIGHT

Chance, in fur-lined evening robe, opens the door.

CHANCE
I figured you'd show up eventually, Scudder.

Matt walks into something that evokes Architectural Digest. Plants everywhere, designer furniture, African sculptures, paintings -- a collection of several dozen tribal masks on the walls. MUSIC is playing, cocaine is out, grass, two pretty Hookers sitting close to each other on the couch, stoned. One of them is Donna. Scudder eyes the interior.

MATT
Hello, Donna.

DONNA
Oh hi, Matt -- right? How are you? You meet my friend Julie?

JULIE
Oh, hi.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DONNA
(snorting)
Isn't she beautiful?

MATT
(eyeing her)
Something else. Some hangout, Chance. I don't know why -- I never trusted guys who lived in apartments like this. Don't you ever leave a dirty ashtray around or a magazine or something?

CHANCE
Don't smoke. Don't read magazines. Don't watch television. I'm a happy man.

MATT
... But you do fuck around, right?

CHANCE
... Got this thing for beautiful women, 'mun. Want some coffee?

He moves to the kitchen, Matt trailing.

MATT
Yeah, these racehorses of yours must really be raking it in, Chance. Thoroughbreds, all of 'em.

CHANCE
It's not all roses, Scudder. It's a business, like any other. They pay you, you gotta deliver.

Ironic glance at Matt.

MATT
'Cept you skip the taxes part.

CHANCE
You forgot racehorses are a tax shelter, baby. Takes a lot of bread to keep 'em groomed and up to par. I don't keep those girls happy, they're gone to somebody else -- women's rights -- ruined everything -- I ever got savings accounts earning interest for 'em, my idea, sort of a pension plan. And don't forget operating costs, rents, clothes, payoffs.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHANCE (CONT'D)
You got a whore installed in a building, you gotta pay off half the building. Twenty a month, a hundred at Christmas. Times ten, twelve girls, it gets up there. Last year, I grossed, let's see, maybe six-fifty, seven hundred thou, right. I musta paid out two, two-fifty... It's small businessmen like me, y'know, keep the economy moving.

MATT
You sound like that guy on TV. 'I make my money the old-fashioned way. I earn it.'

Chance gives him the coffee. A gold Concorde wristwatch, the latest in sleek, flashing on his wrist.

CHANCE
That reminds me, Scudder -- what've you done lately to earn yours?

MATT
Oh yeah, I forgot. I get cynical sometimes. It's all this walking around and ringing doorbells, hanging out in phone booths, y'know, eating pizza and Chinese food. Lousy hours, no money in it. Why do I do it? I don't know. You said something to me about respect. You said 'Nobody touches my racehorses and gets away with it.' Well I don't know, Chance, I think Sunny meant something to you. I think all the girls do. I think behind your pimp attitude and your male fertility god routine there beats a third of a heart in there...

CHANCE
When you get to the point, Scudder, it's gonna be longer than my dong and that's <u>long</u>.

MATT
The point, yeah. Well, I guess what I'm trying to say is I got the guy, Chance.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT (CONT'D)
I got him and I can't touch him and that's real frustrating, that's what I hate about this kinda work, you never really get a 2-3 hitter, ballgame's always a mess, relief pitchers, pinchrunners...

CHANCE
(intent)
You got the killer?

MATT
Take it easy or you won't live to enjoy your pension plan.

SCUDDER VOICE
The only problem was Chance wanted to go out and stick a knife in the guy right away. I convinced him to do it legal. The only wrinkle was he crazy wouldn't let his one hundred thousand dollars out of his sight. He had to come along. I warned him about it, about how Maldonado might be, but he wouldn't listen...

EXT. BROOKLYN - RED HOOK PIERS - NEXT DAY

Matt, with Chance in the passenger seat, drives his van up to a gate with a big sigh, saying "Julzec Lines". A Columbian in a suit waves them through.

They drive over to the edge of the pier. Empty. A spectacular view across the East River of the Manhattan skyline. One of those clear, icy, blue days.

SCUDDER VOICE
We took our second meeting in a garage over in Red Hook in Brooklyn on one of the piers there, owned by some Chinese-Panamiam shipping company... I told him Chance was my taster...

A car pulling alongside them now. A Cadillac. Two guys in the front. Two in the back -- the one rolling down his window is Maldonado. Looking past Matt to Chance... His car drives on.

INT. ANGEL'S CADILLAC - DAY

Matt and Chance sit in Angel's Cadillac.

ANGEL
(on the walkie)
Anything moving out there?

MAN'S VOICE
Just the seagulls, boss.

ANGEL
(to Matt)
So far, so good. You ready to blast off?

MATT
Break out the rocks, Angel.

ANGEL
'Don't hide it, chico, divide it!'
Ha ha ha. You taste this stuff, Jerry the Jew, you gonna turn the same shade your friend here... Leroy? That right?

CHANCE
Let's taste the toot and cut the shit, 'mun.

ANGEL
Oh okay. Hey I like your voice, it's pretty. Like one of them English faggots on TV. Say something else.

CHANCE
Keep it up, 'mun, and I'll stick that tongue of yours up your spic ass and twist it!

Angel goes white. Matt cuts in quickly.

MATT
Awright, awright, you two! Knock off the ethnic jokes. We all got problems. Now let's do some business, and cut the mickey mouse...

Angel lets it pass, smiles.

ANGEL
Okay, okay, don't get hostile... so where's the money, let's do business --- let's fly together, baby.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Matt reaches for the attache case, puts it on the seat next to Angel, opens it. Angel, meanwhile, puts a table down between them and pours out the contents of a brown envelope.

ANGEL
Rainbow rock -- check it out.

Chance takes a snort as Angel glances in the attache case, taking out a random stack of bills, flips it, puts it back.

ANGEL
Good stuff?

Chance looks over at Matt, nods.

CHANCE
It's rainbow alright, I want to test the proof.

Angel laughs, a gravity knife suddenly flicking open with a snap in his left hand.

ANGEL
Fine, but first I stick a knife in you and dump you in the ocean and laugh about it when I'm spending this in Atlantic City...

Chance tenses.

MATT
(bored)
Yeah you could, Angel, but you won't.

ANGEL
No? Why am I so honest for?

MATT
You're not honest, you're just a greedy fuck like me. You know and I know there's millions where this came from, and only a schmuck would settle for peanuts like this...

Angel plays with the knife, balancing it on his hand.

ANGEL
You're a funny guy, Jerry the Jew. You make me think maybe you know something I don't know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT
(dead gambler's eyes)
The dollar bill, Angel, that's all that counts with me. Remember that and you got the key to Jerry Silverstein.

Angel abruptly sheathes the blade on the gravity knife, puts it away, throws open the car door, indicating the meeting is over.

ANGEL
You smart, chico, stay that way. I call you for the drop.

Matt and Chance getting out, focusing now on Matt's face.

INT. MATT'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sarah moving naked from the kitchen, muching on a banana, getting into bed, taking a sip of wine, a hit of coke, a pull on a marijuana cigarette, changing the TV channel, continually restless, Matt watching, his quietness a contrast to hers.

SCUDDER VOICE
I was doing okay... I hadn't had a drink now since... I don't know when. The action was keeping my mind busy. I didn't even have to go to another meeting. But it was still there -- in the shadows. So was Sarah, she could still spoil everything. I had to keep her guessing about what I'd do with the cops. So I called her. I still don't know how we ended up in bed again -- I get confused when I'm sober -- but there was something about her, the way she moved, the goodness in her face that turned me on -- and the feeling, maybe, that somewhere, somehow she cared for me...

SARAH
He's going to rip you off, you know that, don't you?

MATT
He say how?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SARAH
No, but I know him, I know the way he thinks. To him you're an amateur, you deserve to get eaten --

MATT
That's just what I want him to think.

She looks at him. To her he's hopeless.

SARAH
You can just vanish, you know. You don't have to go through with it, Scudder.

MATT
Yes, I do.

SARAH
(pause)
Something about getting even for that little girl got killed?

MATT
(ignores it)
Look, Sarah, the shit's gonna hit the fan. Maybe you better go down to Barbados for a few days --

SARAH
I've been to Barbados, remember? It's not that exciting. I think I'll stick this one out.

They share a look, equally puzzled about each other's motives.

INT. COP BAR - DAY

Matt's with Durkin, who drinks a mug of beer. Matt's working on a Coca-Cola, his eyes crawling over to the beer.

SCUDDER VOICE
... I got word the next day. The drop was going down in a shooting gallery in Brooklyn that night. It was a smart move, good camouflage for him if something went wrong, there'd be a hundred junkies tearing out in all directions. I called Durkin, told him I had Sunny's killer and needed his help. I needed a lot of help.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DURKIN
You crazy sonufabitch! You know how many goddamn approvals I gotta get to get a stakeout like this? And by tomorrow! I gotta go to the Narcotics boys, I got no authority to get involved in something like this. No way, Scudder, no way -- you're on your own...

SCUDDER VOICE
... It took me an hour of talking to get him to see the advantages for him in the situation. Mainly a promotion. And maybe a sense he'd done something after all to push back the barriers of barbarism and keep Attila the Hun at the city gates. Not to pull a pension, but to be a real honest-to-god-cop for a change. Three beers later, he liked the idea. I got out of there as fast as I could, before I licked the puddles of beer off the sawdust floor.

EXT. BROOKLYN SHOOTING GALLERY - NEXT DAY

Matt cruises past a ramshackle building on a corner of a malevolent-looking street overlooking an inter-borough highway. The street seems empty except for Two Junkies who amble into the doorway and disappear. With him is Chance.

They pass a van moving in the opposite direction. Durkin's in the passenger seat, eyes meeting Matt's.

A telephone repair truck is working a line nearby.

Matt pulls up to a space, looks at his watch.

MATT
You still got a choice...

CHANCE
I made it.

MATT
You know you go on this one you may never fuck again?

CHANCE
Then I guess the ladies gonna have to do without it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT
Don't bet on it....

CHANCE
Let's do it 'fore I start thinkin' about this.

They get out of the car, carrying their attache cases and flight bags.

INT. SHOOTING GALLERY - DAY

They knock, wait. A guy opens it. He's Chinese, rough-looking, motions them in.

They're looking down a long, dirty corridor into the back of the building. They walk down this to a "transit area" in the front of some rickety stairs. A line of Junkies wait there anxiously, about twenty of them, real strung out.

A "Captain" with a baseball bat stands there, in charge, a big, tough-looking black guy with a baleful glare. He motions Matt and Chance up against the wall.

A Columbian guy in dark glasses appears out of nowhere, in a suit, on a walkie-talkie, saying something in Spanish.

The Chinese guy runs a search on Matt and Chance, his hands rough, thorough. We dwell on Matt's face against the wall. The BUZZER RINGS from above.

A shuffle of anticipation from the Junkies. The Captain starts them up the stairs. The chain of Junkies follows like a vision out of Dante's Inferno.

The Columbian Guy signals Matt and Chance to follow.

As they get to the next landing, they pass a line of strung-out Junkies who are being shepherded out of the shooting room back down the stairs. They can barely walk straight, a second CAPTAIN with a baseball bat moving them along.

CAPTAIN
Move it, let's go. Time's up. Out!

Matt and Chance are now led through the "shooting room." We briefly see the Junkies lined up, the "Captain" giving them their walking orders just like in the army.

CAPTAIN
Okay I'm the Captain and my bat here's for law and order. I like law and order. That there's my Sergeant...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Sergeant's a black teenager, thin, sneakered, the eyes of a 70-year-old man. He's distributing the "works."

CAPTAIN
... He'll give you the works. 25 cents for the cooker, two bucks for the needle. For another dollar the doctor here'll...

The Doctor's a skinny, white Fagin-type with a degenerate leer, shooting up one of the Junkies in the groin area.

CAPTAIN
... get anybody off who don't have any veins left. When the buzzer goes, next shift, everybody out. You want to stay another five minutes, it's another two bills. Okay, the clock's running...

Matt and Chance move on up the stairs to the third story. Junkies lurk in various corners like insects, getting off.

The third story is spacious, pillared, an old sewing machine factory with several filthy windows giving out on the sky, a hardwood floor, various crates and large shipping cases breaking up the space.

In the middle of this there's a small, cleared recreation-type area with TV, pool and ping pong table, a few cheap accessories. A RECORD'S playing on the STEREO. A Spanish crooner, Colon.

Sitting in a torn, overstuffed armchair behind dark glasses is Angel Maldonado. With him Diego, Primo and Bupi.

ANGEL
Hello, Jerry.

MATT
Angel... You picked some spot.

ANGEL
Yeah, all these junkies, you can't tell the difference.

DIEGO
Okay, spread them...

Matt gives him a freezing look, then glances at Angel.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT
Hey Angel -- I thought we been through this routine. I'm not coming in nude. Everybody put theirs on the table, I put mine on the table.

ANGEL
Yeah, sure, see which one's longer, right? What you got -- grenades? I got rocket launchers in here. Okay, fine, fuck it, forget it. Diego -- off!

Snapping his fingers. Diego backs off.

ANGEL
Gimme a drink. Quick. Quick.

He bops Bupi in the arm. Bupi moves.

ANGEL
Brought your spade with you, hunh. Can he talk? Let him talk. I'm not gonna make this deal if he don't talk. You gotta talk.

Matt glances over at Chance, worried, but Chance smiles, looking Angel right in the eye.

CHANCE
Angel, you're a very pretty little Columbian boy. And you got a nice tight ass. Don't wiggle it too much in my face.

Matt expects all hell to come loose, but Angel only laughs, in a good mood today.

ANGEL
Okay, okay, bueno, you're all right. You're pretty, too. Maybe I fuck you first.
(new tone; to Matt)
Okay, let's do business -- you got the money?

Puts his hand out for the attache case. Matt moves it away.

MATT
Let's test the coke first, then the money.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANGEL
(pauses; shrugs)
Sure, go ahead, test it. Test me too...

EXT. STREET - VAN - DAY

Durkin looks at his watch, RADIO NOISE barking at him. He gets out of the van, moving toward the gallery, looking up.

EXT. ROOF - DAY

Cops in military fatigues are moving on the roof. Ropes, grappling hooks.

INT. SHOOTING GALLERY - DAY

A Junkie shoots himself up, staggers around. A BUZZER goes. A Captain moving through with his baseball bat.

CAPTAIN
Next case! Everybody out. O-U-T!

INT. THIRD FLOOR - DAY

They're all gathered around a pool table, Diego laying out ten keys from a duffel bag. Chance has his testing solvents out and a 3-posted Ohaus scale. A tension among them. Eyes moving left and right. Chance tests the coke in a solution, then tastes it, frowning. Matt glances at his wristwatch again, then looks at Chance.

CHANCE
It's coke, 'mun, but barely. Low grade shit, maybe sixty percent.

MATT
(whips on Angel)
What the fuck you doing, who the fuck you think you're dealing with?!

In the same instant, Matt hears a Magnum .357 CLICK. He turns quickly, but not quick enough.

Bupi is holding it aimed right at his gut, about ten feet away.

ANGEL
Hey, so I'm not so honest, I can't help it, y'know?
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANGEL (CONT'D)
When somebody starts telling me I gotta be honest, that makes me crazy, y'know...

As he approaches Matt, takes the attache case from him, holds out his hand for the key. Matt gives it to him.

ANGEL
Look at it this way, Jerry. I could grease both you cocksuckers and don't give you a thing, right? But I'm not gonna do that. I'm gonna let you walk outta here with that shit. You know why? 'Cause you're gonna figger out a way to sell it to some other street sucker -- and you know what? You'll come back and you'll do business with me again. You know why? 'Cause then you gonna know the score, Jerry, and the score says no Jew cocksucker's gonna come in here first time and beat Angel Maldonado out of ninety-one pure. And you know what -- you'll <u>like</u> me for it.

As he says this, he puts the attache case upon the pool table and opens it.

Matt watching Bupi, waiting for his opening.

Angel looks down aghast at the yellow pages stuffed in the attache case. His face goes livid.

ANGEL
<u>What the fuck is this</u>!

Bupi looks over at his boss, distracted. That's the moment Matt makes his move -- ripping out his .38 from a tear-away holster on his rear waist. He blows Bupi away with THREE BULLETS, the big fat 250-pound man staggering into the pool table, but not killing him.

He wheels on Angel. Their eyes meet for a fraction of a second. Then Angel moves with lightning fighter's reflex, diving as the BULLET arrives a milli-second too late. He rolls under the pool table, pulling his gun.

Diego FIRES off a round at Matt, who now plunges down behind some crates.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Chance has his own gun in hand, FIRING off a round at Primo, hits him in the calf. Primo takes cover, FIRES back. We have five men in a limited space, all with guns.

Chance looking for Matt, can't see him, has an opening, FIRES a round at Diego, trying to move on him. Silence. Only their hard breathing. Sweat coming off his face. He moves on all fours around the edge of a crate.

Angel is there, sees him in the same moment. It's a race of their reflexes. Angel is faster...

A BULLET takes Chance right in the chest, ANOTHER taking out his windpipe.

In the same instant, there is a huge CRASH OF GLASS as one of the skylight windows shatters down on them and two Cops are aiming their assault rifles.

DIEGO
La fiana!

COP
Everybody freeze!

Simultaneously, a BULLHORN BLARES full distorted volume from outside.

BULLHORN
This is the police! You're surrounded! Throw down your weapons and step out! Now!

Cutting short any further discussions, the two Cops on the roof are met with a burst of return FIRE.

Matt in the middle of all this confusion, under the table. He seems a little too cautious, not quite sure of his movements.

ANGEL (O.S.)
(Spanish)
The stairs!

A flash of Angel up and running. Matt sees him, gets off a SHOT, but is pinned by a return BURST from Bupi, who is wounded and brings up the rear...

The Cops are coming through the broken window.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Angel tears out the exit door to the front stairs with a limping Primo and Diego and a wounded Bupi.

But there's a phalanx of Cops coming up the stairs at them. Primo FIRES on them.

One of the Cops goes down, wounded.

Return FIRE decimates Primo.

Angel tears back the other way. One of the rooftop Cops pops up, FIRES a burst. Diego goes down. Angel runs on.

Matt sees him running, but one of the Cops crosses in front of him and there is a fraction of a moment with Matt pointing the gun and checking his pull. He freezes, the implications evident.

Angel runs into an adjoining room, slams the door.

Bupi, wounded, is holding off the Cops on the stairs as the ones from the roof move in behind him. They catch him in a CROSSFIRE. He goes over, falling into the staircase, his 250 pounds crashing through the second floor and going all the way to the ground where he lands with the resounding impact of a wrecking ball, and some thirty freaked-out drug Addicts are running out in all directions, yelling, eyeballs rolling.

Back upstairs, Angel whips open the door through which he ran, and throws out a surprise.

Matt, moving in on the door with one of the Cops, sees it first, and dives.

MATT

Get down!

An enormous GRENADE EXPLOSION engulfs the entire floor, obliterating the Cop with Matt and sending smoke and debris shooting everywhere, the Cops scrambling for cover.

Matt looks up, shaken, and rushes warily to the side of the door where Angel last appeared. Two other Cops run up with him. They pause, eye each other, waiting for the moment. They go -- Matt first, gun raised.

The room is empty. A shaft of daylight from a trap door where he escaped. The first Cop runs toward it. Suddenly there's a POP of tripwire. Matt hears it, dives again for the ground.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT
Trip wire! Down!

Another GRENADE EXPLOSION shatters the room.

EXT. SHOOTING GALLERY

Angel shimmies down the fire escape. Junkies are everywhere, crawling down like rats from a sinking ship, Angel mixing easily among them.

Matt, smoke smudged all over his face, runs to the edge of the fire escape, pursues. Yet we sense in all his movements a caution that prevents him from really closing the gap.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Junkies tearing out in all directions. Cops are trying to tackle them...

One of the younger COPS, a female, runs in, yelling for them to stop when Angel suddenly appears in front of her. She sees him.

COP
You! Freeze!

Angel doesn't hesitate. A gun snickers up in his hand. TWO SHOTS in her face. She collapses, a look of astonishment on her face.

Matt now tears out into the street -- about eight seconds behind Angel. He tears around the corner.

MATT
Everybody stop! Get down! Police!

Angel is hotfooting it across the avenue. Matt takes off after him, bumping into one of the Junkies, almost falling. He backhands the Junkie out of the way, runs.

Angel runs into a movie theater, featuring a Kung Fu triple flick. CAMERA FOLLOWS.

Matt runs in after him, through the aisles filled with drunks, up through the back of the screen, which is ripped. A wild SHOT follows. Then Angel's body rips through the front of the screen. Several beats later, Matt rips through, finishing off the remnants of the chop suey flick. The crowd roars with pleasure.

EXT. THEATER - DAY

Back out on the street, Angel tears through a "candy store" with a warren of rooms behind it.

Matt follows, yelling off startled drug Addicts.

MATT
Out of the way! Out of the way!
Police!

He is out the back, in the yard... past supine Junkies.

He runs into another street, crosses. Angel FIRES back wildly. One round. Two rounds. RICOCHETING off walls, kids scattering, shouts... A little Girl about ten, black, street-smart, yells, grabs her younger brother, about 7, and hauls him down to the sidewalk... Directly in front of Matt's path.

Matt suddenly stops, doesn't move. The gun locked in his hand. His eyes on the brother and the sister, the latter one now looking at him -- puzzled. He is breathing very hard, a disembodied expression on his face. In another street, another time.

Angel vanishes into a subway. A wounded tiger. Into the streets of the city.

The neighborhood people stare at Matt, wondering what could be wrong with him. He shuffles off, putting the gun away.

INT. SHOOTING GALLERY - DAY

A mess. Cordite fumes. Bodies. Medics. Ambulances. Blown-out holes in the walls and staircases. Cops all over the place. Durkin is livid, pulls Matt over.

DURKIN
This is a fucking disacter, Scudder! I got seven dead bodies here and two of them are cops!! All 'cause of one dumb bitch from Wisconsin you had to make into a goddamn fucking crusade!

MATT
Joe... look, we gonna find this guy, we're gonna move on Queens, this case is gonna make...

Corpses go by on litters.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DURKIN
The fuck it is!! We're never gonna find this guy. He's probably walking around outside right now. New name. Johnny Taco or something. Jesus Christ! I'm losing control! The Chief of Operations' gonna be here in five minutes and my ass is in the wind. Twelve years I got in -- twelve years, Scudder. You got me into this mess, if I hadn't listened to you I would've left this goddamn body count at one hooker. Now you got seven other fuckin' people to account for. Didn't I tell you it didn't matter!

Matt trying to walk away. Durkin grabbing him. SIRENS blazing, the Chief of Operations arrives in full uniform with his troop of investigators.

DURKIN
... One stupid little bitch from Wisconsin and you gotta ride around like a fucking knight in white armor, chasing down the fuckin' spic knight. Well fuck you, Scudder, you sanctimonious bastard... where you going!! Get back here!

Matt, weary, turning back to face the music. The Chief of Operations closing in. News reporters closing now with their cameras.

INT. ARMSTRONG'S SALOON - NIGHT

His point of view -- a BARMAID serves him a shot of vodka. A buxom, pretty girl, she smiles at him.

BARMAID
Enjoy it.

He looks at the drink, a warm smile on his face. He's at the crowded bar, oblivious to everything. Next to him, TWO JUNIOR EXEC-types are overheard. A newspaper headline in The Post screams up at him: "7 Slain in Brooklyn Dope Parlor Shootout! 2 Cops Die!" The story is written all over his face.

SCUDDER VOICE
... I finally made it to Page one. It was me in there now. In the barrel.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SCUDDER VOICE (CONT'D)
It'd be good for another day or two, then everybody'd forget about it -- 'cept the widows and me... in fact a couple hours later the Arabs blew up 230 Marines in Beirut and that wiped my story out... 'Course two hours later I couldn't remember a thing anyway...

As he drinks the first one. The smile coming to his face, like a warm mama's kiss.

JUNIOR EXEC
... well if she really liked me then why doesn't she go to bed with me?

2ND JUNIOR EXEC
Maybe 'cause you think she can read your mind. It don't happen with your mind, Larry, it happens with your dong.

Matt smiling, drinks again. His ear going to another conversation. A decrepit-looking white DRIFTER-type is drunk and boasting to this older Guy.

DRIFTER
What happened? What do you think happened? She paid me to kill him so I killed him. I shot him in the head in his car outside the 7-11.

The guy catches Matt looking at him, glares. Matt looks away, refocuses on this heavy-set Girl who's waving to him from down the bar. As if she knows him from someplace. He shrugs, and waves back, smiling idiotically, not noticing the Woman on the seat next to his waving back at the Girl. She gets up to go over there. Matt looks back at his drink.

DRIFTER
... you can tell her she's next...

The barmaid appears in huge CLOSEUP, taking his attention. That smile.

BARMAID
How 'bout another one?

MATT
Sure.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The near-empty glass. His face through the glass... as he finishes it. A pause. He puts it down, his face telling us he is in hell, and knows it.

INT. A.A. MEETING - NIGHT

He wanders in, outwar ly sober, but sits down loudly, almost falling off the chair. About fifteen of them, the speaker a sweet-looking OLDER birdlike LADY, on the proper side, probably a heavy sherry drinker once.

OLDER LADY
... it was a revelation to me when I learned I didn't have to be comfortable. Nowhere is it written that I must be comfortable.

MATT
(loudly)
So? Get to the point, willja.

They all look at him politely. He seems normal enough. The speaker goes on.

OLDER LADY
... well I always thought, you see, if I felt anxious or unhappy about something I had to do something about it. I had to drink. But I learned that's not true. Alcohol will kill me, but my feelings won't -- and when you can fully experience your feelings of grief and guilt and... and fear, then --

MATT
Yeah, what about the feelings of the mother on Second yesterday who got crushed by the falling air conditioner? What were her feelings? They were crushed, alright. Maybe she drank too much, maybe this was God's way of coming down on her, hunh.

Two of the Monitors are moving toward him slowly. They drag him out by the elbows as his tone intensifies.

MATT
Or how 'bout the Spanish guy who left his wife and two daughters in his Toyota over on Eighth, you see that one?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT (CONT'D)
He runs across the street, buys a pack of cigarettes and comes back just in time to watch this giant cement truck crush his goddamn car with his family sitting inside wondering what the fuck's happening! I betcha that guy needs a drink, but maybe he should come in here and drool his life story all over the floor here so the resta you can nod like ducks in a soap opera and say, 'Hey, buddy, your feelings won't kill you.' The hell they won't! You know what you are? You're brainwashed! You know what you need? Another drink!

As they drag him out.

HUSKY MAN
Awright, partner, let's get some air and some milk in you. Take it easy now. You'll get over this...

MATT
(in the distance)
You know the one about the two hookers? You hear that one...

INT. CAB - NIGHT (TRAVELING)

Matt hangs his head out the window, getting the air, sick to his stomach.

The CABBIE, a Russian emigre, looks over, sniffs.

CABBIE
Rough night, hunh? Smells like vodka. You know, once I drank twenty-five straight vodkas -- and I don't feel a thing. Then... Boom! To die was my wish. My stomach feel like it have a big dirty shoe inside, kicking.

He laughs.

The thought makes Matt even sicker.

INT. SARAH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The door BUZZER rings incessantly. Sarah, in a slip, goes over, worried, looks in the peephole.

HER POV

Matt makes a clown face in the glass.

ANOTHER ANGLE

She opens the door. The chain is still on.

MATT
(silly)
Hi. It's me... I uh... thought maybe we could have that drink together.

SARAH
Seems like you started without me. You all right?

MATT
No. I'm falling apart... Can you... Can you let me in?

His tone quiet, but desperate. She undoes the chain. He steps across, weaves.

MATT
Guess what? I blew it. He got away.

SARAH
(disgusted)
I saw it on TV.

MATT
Fuck it. What can you do --

He walks over to the bar, pours a giant vodka, weaves again.

SARAH
(follows)
Not what you're doing... Where do you think he is?

MATT
Columbia -- if he's got any brains. But he'll be back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SARAH
Yeah. And looking for me. You really screwed it up, Scudder.

MATT
What can you do. Some people y'know -- they were born to fuck up. And the harder they try the bigger the mess gets. That's me.
(drinks, then toasts)
Here's to all the losers in the world.

He lifts the drink to his lips and in the same move crashes down across the bar, out like a light. BLACK SCREEN.

FADE IN & SEMI-FADE OUT:

A blur of light. Darkness returns. Then flowers open. Voices in Spanish sound like machine guns. The SCREEN plunges back to SEMI-DARKNESS as we GLIMPSE Matt's BLURRED hangover.

SARAH'S VOICE
(Spanish)
What do you want from me! I had nothing to do with it. He said he'd...

ANGEL'S VOICE
(Spanish)
Shut up, you cunt. You're dead.

A hard SLAP. She fights back.

SARAH'S VOICE
(English)
Let go of me! You can't!... I'm not! No! No! Don't do that!

A second, third SLAP. She tries to yell, but he slams his hand over her mouth and knocks her to the floor.

FADE IN.

Matt's eyes open once again, to the hitting, the SOUNDS of struggle. Then a GLIMPSE -- of Sarah trying to crawl away, and Angel Maldonado pulling his gravity knife, yanking her back by the hair. Sarah's eyes locking on Matt's.

SARAH
Get up! Matt!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Matt, prodded by the words, sluggishly moves. Angel's eyes crossing to him, seeing he's awake. He now realizes he must deal with Matt first. Matt realizes it also -- about three beats later, such are his reflexes at this stage.

Angel, moving like a panther, light on his feet, rolls Sarah over and smashes her twice, hard, in the face, incapacitating her.

Matt, in the same instant, tries rolling to his feet. A ten-foot wave of alcoholic nausea slams him in the gut, the world wheezy and spinning before his eyes. What chance does he have?

Angel, realizing his state, takes his time, walking up on him, the knife ready to slip into his heart.

Matt backing off, trying to gain time, fighting the urge to vomit, the bleary aftertaste of vodka and beer. Matt, pulling his pistol, is slow and awkward with it. Angel moves, kicks it right out of his hand with a whipping soccer kick.

ANGEL
(advancing)
Cocksucker -- you gonna eat this. You cost me, Silvershmuck. You gonna die slow, just like Sunny. Gonna pull your tongue through your throat, and you gonna feel it... Then I'm gonna take care of her. You stinkin' piece of shit, die!

He lunges. Matt feints -- poorly. The blade rips into his side, takes a piece of him. Matt cries out... his voice gurgled.

Matt moving back, bleeding.

MATT'S POV

Angel moving with him. An alcoholic blur -- two Angels moving at the same time.

ANOTHER ANGLE

They're in the living room now. Strips of early morning sunshine crisscross the room. A red dawn is coming up over Sarah's terrace.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Matt's looking around for a weapon, anything. He sees something, moves toward it.

Angel comes after him. Matt throwing the dining room table over to get some distance, makes his move now for the bar area. Angel hurtling the table two seconds behind him.

Matt gets his hands on the neck of a wine bottle and swivels with it just as Angel arrives on top of him, sticking his knife into his side. Thuck! It goes into his flesh into the wooden sideboard at the same moment that Matt, with a gasp of pain, smashes the wine bottle full into the side of Angel's head. It shatters loudly. A cry of pain from both men.

Angel staggers back, still clutching his knife, holding his head, groaning.

Matt's hand is bleeding from the shattered bottle and he has pretty good wounds on both sides now. But he goes after Angel and kicks him in the gut. Angel stumbles, drops the knife. Matt follows up on him, hits him a couple of times in the face with his good hand and the back of his other elbow.

Angel looks at him a beat. At a new layer now of mano a mano. Angel lets out a brutal cry and comes after Matt, unloosing a barrage of punches and clips to his face, very professionsl, very fast, and endowed with rage.

Matt staggers back, his eyes flicking to the knife on the floor. No chance. Angel closing on him, punishing him now. The fighter in him, weaving, bobbing, one blow after the other landing in Matt's face. Matt swings back, but Angel is too fast, ducking his blows, and hammering him.

Suddenly, Sarah is there, behind Angel, swinging a crystal ashtray that half connects with the back of his ear. He cries out, staggers, hurt.

He whips around, stares at Sarah, smashes her as hard as any man has ever hit a woman, a primal fury, catapulting her across the room. She tries to get up, but it hurts too much.

In the interim, Matt has gone for the knife, gets it. The avenging Angel closes on him. Matt lunges with it, catching Angel in the forearm. Angel hardly reacts, flat-hands Matt into the jaw, twists his knife arm around, under his own arm in a judo-type hold.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They grapple, knocking over the rest of the furniture. They strain, face to face, Matt sobering as fast as he can, breaks the hold, but Angel is faster and as Matt swings around to stick him, Angel unleashes two more lightning punches to the face that once again stagger Matt. Angel follows up with a killer left-right combination.

EXT. TERRACE - DAWN

The glass door of the terrace shattering as Matt hurtles through it, Angel right on his tail, hits him again. He's rolling across the flower boxes and planters and into the shrubs. On the north side, icy skyscraper mountains, burnished with lights, stare down at them implacably. The first pink traces of the dawn creeping up over the East River where a huge Coca-Cola sign winks at us.

Matt is picked up and beaten deeper and deeper to the edge of the parapet, nose and teeth broken, an eye cut and bleeding, a pulp, cauliflower.

But in the throes of his defeat we see a giant inner rage rousing from its bombed-out, second-best, blurry stupor. His expression changing as he takes one blow too many. He blocks the next. And the next one. And a third. The bare bones of the man stretch and grimace with a new inner strength.

Angel fails to read the shift in mood, cocky now, smiling through the blood from his scalp. Then Matt nails him one right in the face, bloodying his nose. He's even more surprised when Matt counterpunches him again, then pounds him with two full bellyhooks, then flicks up and catches him again in the face. Angel moves off, a little stunned. The guy has legs and <u>can</u> fight.

Matt is all over him now, transported, giving him no quarter, on his own last legs, his broken pumpkin of a face lit with rage and purpose and inner strength, the coming together of all the loose ropes of a broken life, a force of nature now that cannot be stopped by such things as a boxing skill.

Angel now understands he has made a serious miscalculation. Matt pounds him repeatedly until he crashes into the shrubbery at the edge of the parapet. He tries to get up. Scudder is waiting for him, implacable, Angel feeling for his brain, his nerves, his eyes -- his sight beginning to dim.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANGEL
Mi ojos! Mi ojos!

The nerve in Angel Maldonado's brain that never could take the ring is now shattered and he is in terrible pain, writhing in agony and hatred, charging Matt for the kill, going for his throat with a blood-curdling yell of hatred.

Matt hits him with his last shot, one hammer-like blow that carries with it the revenge of Sunny Hendryx and the redemption of a little Spanish girl with a bullet in her face.

It propels Angel right over the parapet, head-first, yelling into the chasm of the East River Drive, flailing like a blind bat flying into Hell.

Matt looks down after him, almost numb. Then he remembers. Where he is and why. And he hobbles as fast as he can off the terrace and back into the apartment.

INT. APARTMENT - DAWN

Matt hurries in, goes to Sarah's side, she's looking at him, bleary.

SARAH
... He's...?

MATT
... not coming back.

She relaxes. He wipes the blood off her face with a handkerchief.

MATT
You look like shit...

SARAH
You don't look so great yourself...

MATT
You should have my hangover on top of it.

She breaks a smile. He joins her. As he helps her to her feet...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SARAH'S APARTMENT (A LITTLE LATER)

Matt hangs up the phone, turning to Sarah cleaning herself up in her bathroom.

SARAH
You're going to bring me into this, aren't you?

MATT
Got to... but you'll walk away. Your parents're gonna be in for a surprise, but you'll be back in business in no time. Just be careful he don't have some brother-in-law looking for you.

SARAH
I told you one day I'd walk away. I meant it.

MATT
(skeptical)
And do what?

Ambulance SIRENS can now be heard from down the street.

SARAH
I don't know, interior designer... why not? I could put myself through school. I always wanted to do that. Maybe now's the time.

MATT
Maybe.

SARAH
And you?

Police SIRENS downstairs now -- immediate, urgent.

MATT
More of the same, I guess...

Sarah collects some things to go to the police station.

SARAH
Yeah... you and I are pretty good at lying to ourselves, Scudder, you drink, I whore... but maybe there're no shortcuts, no detours. Maybe you just gotta go through things a day at a time... take care of yourself, Matt. I'll miss you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT
So will I...

EXT. SARAH'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

A crowd has gathered in the street. Cops. Ambulances. Newspaper and television reporters mill around. This is going down on the 5:00 news.

Sarah in sunglasses, elegant, being led by Durkin and others into a car, Reporters asking her all sorts of meaningless questions.

Matt, moving past the flattened pancake corpse of Angel Maldonado, beneath a blue rubber sheet, Medivac units trying to peel his silhouette off the pavement... there's a goofy New York look to the tableau -- senior citizens in pajamas comparing notes, fruit sellers, bag lady, boys unloading trucks, a mother wheeling her baby, a bicyclist on the sidewalk, a sidewalk clown, businessmen hurrying past with quick looks at the large and expanding crowd.

He moves past the Press being pushed away by the police to the edge of the rear window of the cop car, leans down, eye to eye with Sarah.

MATT
I was thinking I'd like to see you again...

She looks at him.

SARAH
Sober up first -- then we'll see.
(a little smile)
You know that line when Heinrich Heine was dying -- the German poet?

MATT
No.

SARAH
He said, 'God will pardon me. It's his profession.'

MATT
That's not bad...

SARAH
It's probably even better in German...
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SARAH (CONT'D)
I schtup and you detect and God pardons... I just hope He does. When it's my turn in the barrel, I hope He's not down there in Barbados for the weekend.

Durkin puts the car in gear. Matt suddenly leans in, gracefully, quick, and gives her a kiss on the lips with a gentleness we have not yet seen. She is surprised, her eyes on him as the car drives away. Matt looking at it go up the street, now turns and walks away.

INT. CHURCH - A.A. MEETING - DAY

They're sitting there in a circle, about ten of them, daylighters, waiting.

Jim, the black guy in the army jacket, leans forward.

JIM
Okay, that just about wraps it up for today...

Then he notices Matt has his hand up, in his chair with a cup of coffee. A subtle look of surprise in Jim's eyes.

JIM
Yeah, Matt? You want to add something?

MATT
Uh... I'd like to speak.

Pause. The reaction can be read in Jim's face. He leans back.

JIM
The floor's yours, Matt...

An excruciating silence. Matt is struggling -- really struggling to say it -- his eyes roving among the ten blank faces.

MATT
Uh... my name is Matt... Scudder.

It sticks in his throat and he has to start over.

MATT
My name is Matt... and I'm an alcoholic...
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT (CONT'D)
I probably been an alcoholic since I was nineteen and I was going into the Police Academy. It was the thing to do. I started with whiskey and beer and then over the years...
(his throat is stuck)
... over the years...

As the CAMERA PULLS AWAY:

SCUDDER VOICE
And the goddamnest thing happened. I started to cry.

FADE OUT.

THE END